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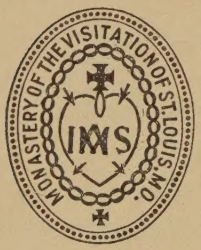
SISTER MARY MARTHA CHAMBON

Religious of the Visitation of Holy Mary of Chambéry

1841—1907

In English by
THE SISTERS OF THE VISITATION
St. Louis



MONASTERY OF THE VISITATION
Cabanné and Belt Avenues
SAINT LOUIS
MISSOURI

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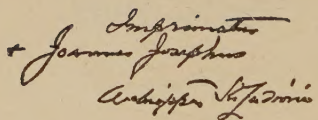

January 29, 1930

INTRODUCTION

The prophets who announced the mystery of our Redemption, as well as the Apostles who preached it to the world, agree in recognizing as the instrumental cause of our salvation the Holy Wounds of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

"He was wounded for our iniquities," says Isaias, (53-5).

"He was bruised for our sins and annihilated to save us. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him and by His bruises we are healed."

Saint Peter repeats the same words. (I Pet. 2-24). St. Paul reechoes him: "Being now justified by His Blood shall we be saved. (Rom. 5-9.)

"What is holier than these wounds," writes Pope Innocent VI? "Our salvation has come from them."

Therefore, it is not astonishing that a poor illiterate girl meditating on salvation should have been struck by the importance of the Holy Wounds of Our Lord. It enters fully into the analogies of mysticism that the divine Master revealed to her the efficacy of these Holy Wounds for the conversion of sinners, for the fervor of contemplative souls, and for the obtaining of all graces.

The present work is an exposition of these essential truths. It is the life of a humble domestic Sister of the Visitation of

ACC 1/1857

Chambéry, Apostle of the devotion to the Holy Wounds of Our Lord, Sister Mary Martha Chambon.

It is needless to remark the piety, the close attention, and the aspirations for perfection with which these writings and reminiscences have been prepared for public presentation. Their charm will appeal to all.

In the cloistered life there are but few actions of special note, above all, examples of piety and virtue must be sought for. As to the extraordinary favors and revelations with which Sister Mary Martha was favored, they will be admired without aspiring to obtain the like. They are rare occurrences and choice graces of which it is proper to consider one's self very unworthy, even after having purified the soul by rigorous austerities and the constant practise of humility and Christian patience.

An important distinction must be established between Divine Revelation *and the revelations made to certain souls during the period of Christianity. Divine Revelation is closed by the last word of the last surviving Apostle, Saint John, terminating his Apocalypse and invoking the coming of the Sovereign Judge: "Come, Lord Jesus! Amen."*

Revelation is thus finished by the inspired Scripture, of which the sacred deposit is confided to the Church and may never more be added to.

Other private revelations which may happen, do not require of our minds an adhesion of faith, but only a pious belief. What is learned from holy souls as the object of supernatural communications, what they teach or recommend to us as having been transmitted to them by God, can never add

anything new to the collection of revealed truths contained in the Holy Scriptures and recognized by the Church.

The province of ecclesiastical authority consists in ascertaining that in these private revelations there is nothing contrary to the doctrine of the Sacred Scriptures, but that all is in accord with the truth taught by the official organs of the Church, and that subjects of edification are found therein.

It is after having investigated these matters that we willingly give our approval to this work.

May the Life of Sister Mary Martha cause a greater appreciation of the love of God for man, of the value of the sufferings of Our Lord, and of the fear of offending so august and tender a Majesty. This is the lesson of the Holy Wounds.

We shall endeavor to follow the relation of this humble life; all hidden as it was, it will preach the love of prayer and labor, the spirit of obedience and submission, the true gates of heaven. Virtues are of much more value than a luminous ray which has escaped from the mystical heavenly regions, because they lead to an exuberance of glory and of celestial happiness.

✠ Dominic CASTELLAN,
Archbishop of Chambéry.

To His Grace Monseigneur CASTELLAN
Archbishop of Chambéry

Monseigneur:

Your Grace has often expressed to us a desire for the publication of the Life of the humble Domestic Sister, whose simplicity and innocence seem to have attracted the special attention of Our Lord.

To assume this task has been a severe trial to our inexperience. Besides the conviction of doing a work for the utility of souls, the thought of doing what was agreeable to our venerated Father, was more than once necessary to sustain our courage.

Permit us to dedicate to Your Grace the fruit of our obedience.

In a close study of the notes left by our Superiors, we beheld more and more clearly a gradual development of the spiritual physiognomy of Sister Mary Martha Chambon. And what appears to us more clearly every day is, that—abstracting from the extraordinary ways by which she was led—our Sister was, above all, "an exemplary Visitandine."

Detached from the world, the Visitandine should lead a life of intimacy and union with Jesus in "humility, meekness, and simplicity." (1)

Despoiled of every personal view, the Visitandine ought to have no other objective than the love, the glory, and the interests of God. It is not only for herself that she has been chosen and called: "Let their whole life and all their actions tend to unite them with God, in order to procure by their prayers and good example, support to the Church and salvation to their neighbor. (2)

Monseigneur, these are the things that, in imitation of our Holy Founder, you love, and excel in reminding us of at each of your paternal visits, because you know that this is our vocation, our "Mission". This "Mission," our Sister Mary Martha, all ignorant and simple as she was, fulfilled marvelously and without intermission from her religious profession to her grave, in constant intimacy with our Lord and in propagating devotion to the Holy Wounds.

She has left us the charge of continuing it. We wish to carry on this work by the diffusion of these pages, where every line loudly proclaims the love which, more powerfully than the nails, bound our Savior to the Cross.

May your benediction, Monseigneur, give them more strength and power; and under your patronage, may the devotion of the Holy Wounds radiate afar, for the good and salvation of the greatest possible number of souls!

(1) St. F. de Sales, Entertainment XIII.
(2) Spiritual Directory, Art. 1st.

Deign, Monseigneur, to extend this benediction to the humble family of Lémenc, so happy in your paternal care.

May it aid us to become daily more devoted Spouses of Jesus Crucified, true sisters and inheritors of the Confidante of His Passion, true daughters of our Holy Father and Mother, as we are of Your Grace by the profound respect, submission, and gratitude, which we filially offer to you.

In the Heart of Him, Whose place and authority you hold, we remain, Monseigneur,

The very humble, obedient, and unworthy daughters and servants of Your Grace, in Our Lord,

THE SUPERIOR AND SISTERS OF THE
VISITATION OF HOLY MARY.

From our Monastery of Chambéry
September 14, 1928

D. S. B.

PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION

In 1924, October 13, when a brochure was published by the local Convent of the Visitation under the title *Sister Mary Martha Chambon of the Visitation of Holy Mary of Chambéry and the Holy Wounds of Our Lord Jesus Christ,* we gave the same our approval and Imprimatur, since the Ordinary of the place of publication of the original had authorized its printing, and the work had the special blessing and approval of the Holy See.

In like manner it gives us pleasure to give our permission for the printing of this English translation of the larger and more complete French original published by the Visitation Monastery at Chambéry, September 14, 1928.

There is nothing we can add to the preface written for this French volume by our venerable and beloved brother, the Most Reverend Dominic Castellan, Archbishop of Chambéry. He who is the spiritual father of the beloved community where Sister Mary Martha passed her religious life and of the diocese where she spent her life before entering the Visitation, has said sufficient to give the book an appeal. Furthermore, we are confident that the good Sisters of the Visitation in Saint Loius have been faithful in their work of translation.

In these days when every one is reading, it is gratifying to see that Catholic literature is being well received, and that in

Catholic literature itself, spiritual books are widely read—among the biographies, we find not only the lives of canonized saints, but also those of other persons whose lives were distinguished for their fidelity in the practice of the virtues of religion. Among these latter people, we can add the name of Sister Mary Martha Chambon to that ever-growing list in France and Catholic Europe generally.

This new biography should encourage others in the pursuit of sanctity—in particular, those who like Sister Mary Martha have embraced the religious life; but also that constantly increasing number of pious persons whose vocation is to remain "in the world".

May this life of Sister Mary Martha Chambon be an inspiration to its many readers to take up seriously that counsel of the Master: "Be ye perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect."

Given at Saint Louis, Missouri, on the Feast of Saint Francis de Sales, January 29, 1930.

✠ John Joseph Glennon,
Archbishop of Saint Louis.

THIS little work of the English translation of the life of their humble Sister Mary Martha Chambon, with its purpose of increasing and diffusing the devotion to the Holy Wounds of Our Lord Jesus Christ, is gratefully and heartily offered to

His Grace

The Most Reverend
ARCHBISHOP JOHN J. GLENNON

by his filially devoted daughters, the Sisters of the Visitation of Holy Mary of Saint Louis.

Feast of the Holy Wounds
of Our Lord Jesus Christ,
March 28, 1930.

SISTER

MARY MARTHA CHAMBON

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THE PREPARATION

CHAPTER I

CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

"I am the Flower of the field and the Lily of the valley. I seek a pure heart and there I make my abode."
(Cant. II-1.)

SISTER Mary Martha Chambon was born at La Croix-Rouge, a little village situated at some kilometers from Chambéry, in the midst of a magnificent landscape, which is majestically dominated by Mont Nivolet with the superb cross, which since 1862 projects its protecting shadow over the surrounding region. (1)

The village of Croix-Rouge belonged to the parish of Saint Pierre de Lémenc, the ancient "Lemencum" of the Romans. It was in the Church attached to our Monastery—former residence of the Feuillants Fathers—(2) that the child was regenerated on the very day of her birth, March 5, 1841. (3) She received in baptism the name of Françoise.

Our adorable Savior, Who had destined her for a perfect imitation of His states of annihilation, poverty, and suffer-

(1) A monumental cross was erected by the piety of Count de Fernex on the prominent peak of the Nivolet at an altitude of 1,558 meters. It was thrown to the ground in a violent storm in 1910, it was immediately replaced by the faith and love of the Savoyards. The 10,000 francs necessary for its restoration were quickly subscribed. Under its covering of aluminium it again scintillates in the rays of the sun and blesses the entire Savoy.
(2) See note, page 18.
(3) The "Brochure of the Holy Wounds" gives erroneous date, May 24, 1844.

ing, imprinted upon her from the hour of her birth the seal of His divine resemblance. The future Spouse of Jesus had for her cradle only the manger of a stable; and truly the miserable hut, with its thatched roof and hard earthen floor, where she first saw the light of day, could rival in poverty the Grotto of Bethlehem.

A little room, cold and damp, such was the first shelter of the Chambon household. When the family increased—for Françoise was the eldest of one sister and six brothers (1)—some planks, forming a low loft, made a sleeping place for the sons as they grew up. In a corner, proudly called a stable, there was a single goat, that Françoise, as soon as she was old enough, led along the road to the pasture. This recalls a great trial that came to little Françoise at that time. One day, whilst she was inattentive, doubtless lost in the thought of God, Who had already manifested Himself to her soul, the mischievous animal escaped from the thorny hedge to ramble and browse in the more attractive meadow. Just at that moment the keeper of the grounds passed, who immediately took note of and reported it, to the distress of the poor child, who wept at seeing herself the cause of an additional tax upon the already scanty means of her parents. Françoise's relatives seem to have believed that this incident contributed in no small measure to her intense disgust for the world, which appeared to her so pitiless and full of dangers.

Françoise's father was a simple, upright man, with lively faith and unusual piety. Having been cured by Saint Philomena, he was always very devout to her. He brought up his

(1) One died in infancy, but all died before their sister Françoise.

family in a Christian manner. He was a hard-working man, always occupied in the fields or in the neighboring quarries. As his sons grew older they went with him to work. All were hired by the day, and between times they cultivated a little garden near their house.

The reputation of the Chambon family was perfect. When the eldest son thought of marrying, his future father-in-law, who was rather well-to-do, astonished his friends by accepting for his daughter's hand a young man who had absolutely nothing. "It is true that they are poor," replied this man of sense and of faith, "but they are so good! The mother is above all such a fine woman, such a good Christian, that I am happy to give my daughter to him."

By means of labor and integrity the family rose from its miserable condition and succeeded in acquiring a modest income. The old home was abandoned, to be used as a cellar, a charming cottage with a pretty wooden balcony was built nearby, and the rooms were fitted up by the children themselves. Sister Mary Martha could now verify how well the divine benediction is diffused upon those whom Jesus had promised her to regard as His own.

"In the same manner that I will give to the religious soul the hundredfold that I have promised, so shall I give it to the parents." That is to say according to the Gospel, *"the hundredfold in this world and eternal life in the other."*

Our dear Sister's mother, a descendant of an impoverished branch of the noble family of Barandier (1), was truly worthy of these promises. Madame Chambon loved to take

(1) Mlle. Louise B..., an Aggregate Sister and benefactress of the Monastery, learned of this illustrious descent. Sister Mary Martha

her little eldest child to the religious ceremonies, and in particular to ascend the sorrowful Way of the Cross on the hill overlooking our Monastery and the City, and which from its resemblance to the holy Mount was called "Calvary." She was considered a saint by all who knew her. Our Lord will in the future show this child, having become His Spouse, the soul of her dear mother ravishing the divine Heart by her genuine piety: *"This woman will have a very beautiful crown in Heaven."*

Under such an influence Françoise could not but be drawn to God. Towards the end of her life she still recalled the joy of her innocent heart when her mother tenderly placing her hand on the little one's head, she was about four or five years old, remarked to a neighbor: "Oh, as for this one, she will never marry."

He Who calls Himself "the Flower of the field and the Lily of the valley" was not long in attaching to Himself the humble violet, whose pure perfume was made to please Him. Shortly before her death our Sister related in her own rustic language details of the manner of training children in the country district of Savoy towards 1850,—divine communications are mingled with her most distant remembrances.

"My mother placed the service of God before everything; she was firm with my brothers, never giving them their

immediately rose in her esteem and she wished to question her: "I hear, Sister, that you are of the Barandier family! Was your mother's name Barandier?" "Yes," replied Sister Mary Martha, "that was her name." "Do you know that this is a noble family?" "I know, but this means nothing to me, I pay no attention to these things," answered the good Sister, making her escape as quickly as she could.

breakfast until they had said their prayers. Sometimes they wept through hunger but she never yielded. My father worked in the fields, he labored hard and was a good man. I also had an aunt, my godmother, who was a worthy woman.

"One Good Friday when I was eight or nine years old, my aunt took me to adore the Cross in the Church of Lémenc. When I had knelt down she said to me: 'Françoise, extend your arms and recite five Paters and Aves.' I could hardly put my arms in this position as, shortly before, I had become very sick and nauseated in loading some hay. For several days I had eaten hardly anything, and I was very weak, scarcely able to stand. But I put my arms in the form of a Cross and said the five Paters. At that moment *I saw Him for the first time!* He was attached to the Cross, all covered with blood! Oh, in what a pitiable state He was! He did not speak to me. After a while my aunt took me away. I did not tell her nor any one else that I had seen Him."

This was the first revelation of the Passion of the Savior, which was to hold such a prominent place in her existence. Jesus did not speak—had He need of words to make Himself understood? Doubtless a power of infinite attraction escaped from the adorable Wounds of Christ and kindled in this young soul the desire that consumed His own Heart: that of a more intimate union in His Sacrament of Love. To Communicate! To receive Jesus! Françoise had henceforth no other aspiration. When she spoke of it to the Curé of her parish, he replied: "My little child, you must learn your catechism." "Then my mother sent me to school

and I learned the catechism at once," she related, with a surprised and a rather triumphant air. It would seem that a particular grace aided her, inasmuch as this knowledge of the catechism, acquired by hearing, limited her instruction. Sister Mary Martha never knew how to read or write. But without suspecting it, how learned she already was in the science of Christian life and virtues! At this tender age she understood and felt the need of mortification. However, what was to be retrenched from a daily fare so poor and meager? The souls of children, when they are elect souls, may teach their elders in this matter. "Mother," said Françoise, "give me my soup before you put the butter in it."

The little girl was allowed a corner in the humble cottage in which she placed some pictures that had been given to her. There was her altar, and every night when she thought all were asleep, she arose very quietly and remained a long time kneeling on the bare ground, praying with all the fervor of her young love, until her mother, perceiving it, told her to go back to bed. Sometimes during the day Françoise, escaping the maternal solicitude, ran to her godmother's near by. This unmarried sister of her father lived, we know not why, in an old hermitage or oratory still surmounted by a miniature tower with its bell. The hamlet of Croix-Rouge, at quite a distance from the parish church, had assuredly need of this place of prayer. Perhaps, the Revolution having passed, the little abandoned house was allowed to this pious woman.

However, she loved to assemble, in the evening, in her peaceable dwelling, relatives and neighbors to recite the Rosary

in common. (1) The "Chapelle," as it is still called, thus realized its first destination. Françoise loved the "Chapelle" very much, and also her good aunt, her godmother, who with her many attractions was not wanting in affection. She willingly cared for her little godchild, replacing her mother, when overburdened, in taking the little one to church and, when the time came, carefully aiding in preparing her for her First Communion. At last, the great day came, September 8, 1850. Let us listen to this privileged soul recalling after many years, remembrances of this event:

"Finally, I made my First Communion; it was in the Church at Lémenc. And when I had communicated it was the little Jesus whom I saw and received. Oh, how happy I was! He told me that each time I should communicate, it would be in this manner." "And how did the little Jesus look?" she was asked. "Had He little blond curls and a white dress as in the pictures?" "Oh, poor Sister," she exclaimed, "it is not in that way. Do you not know that these things cannot be described?" "And ever since," she continued, *"I have always seen Him.* Oh, it is heaven! Paradise was in my heart! The good God always spoiled me; I am told it is because I am so poor and ignorant.

"We were always together; when I went to work in the fields or to gather greens for the goat, the little Jesus was always there near me. We went along the paths together,

(1) Before an antique statue in gilded wood of the Blessed Virgin, which in homage of veneration for the memory of Sister Mary Martha, was offered recently to our Community by the members of her family. By a sentiment of touching faith all were reunited at the feet of the venerated image to pray a last time before saying their final adieus, and it was with tears that they separated from her.

we used to work, and we always came back together. I was very happy and I used to sing on the way." "And what did you sing?" was asked. "The *Tantum ergo*—everything that is sung in the Church."

"M. le Curé often permitted me to communicate. Sometimes the Holy Virgin gave me her little Jesus. On the feast of the Nativity of our Blessed Lady, September 8, the Blessed Sacrament was exposed, I remained after the High Mass and I saw the Holy Virgin. She held her little Jesus and she gave Him to me. I do not know how long I remained, but when I reached my home the dinner was over. My father was angry and scolded me for remaining so long in the church. "Have you seen the Blessed Virgin since?" she was asked. "Oh, yes, very often, but this time it was notable."

Thus, from the aurora of this life we see the two attractions which regulated the whole spiritual life of our Sister: On one side the Crib and the Eucharist, which she never separated because it was always the Infant Jesus that she saw in the white Host; the Crib and the Eucharist, that is to say, the "Holy Infancy" and effacement.

On the other side: the Crucifix!—love suffering—love immolating itself—love repairing.

Prepared by so many graces the soul of Françoise turned instinctively towards a contemplative religious life, and her personal attraction was in accord with the sentiment of the Abbé Lacombe, Curé of Lémenc since September, 1859. But should he hasten to the cloister a young girl of nineteen and not at all robust? Admission to the Third

Order of St. Francis Assisium appeased for a time her desire of consecrating herself to God.

Soon this desire was awakened more vehemently than ever. Far from drawing a presumptuous assurance of her salvation from her attraction for God and divine things, this simple peasant girl—and we can hardly believe it—feared for her salvation. Sometimes she experienced a great terror of hell. This fear, as she admitted later, was one of the motives that drew her to the cloister. It also appeared to her that she was called to repair the defection of a member of her family, who losing courage had abandoned his vocation to be a Brother of the Christian Doctrine.

Whilst gathering up the grass and dead wood from the rocks around the walls of Carmel and of the Visitation, not yet surrounded by villas and gardens—which they had no trouble in doing without—the poor child incessantly implored our Lord that He would some day let her enter "in there".

"What did you wish to do in the Convent since you always had the little Jesus with you?" she was asked later by one of the Sisters. "I wished to be occupied with Him alone, to think only of Him, to live like the angels, and never more to see the things of the world, men, nor any one."

"But," was the smiling reply, "you have not seen much of the world." "Oh, not much—my companions of Croix-Rouge and a little of Chambéry."

At Carmel, where she was first presented, it was judged that her strength was not sufficient to bear the weight of the Rule. God had not marked her place there.

Abbé Lacombe had the thought of presenting his little parishioner to our very honored Mother Marie-Pauline Deglapigny, who, charmed with the candor of the young girl, asked her to await a vacancy among our Domestic Sisters, sending her away full of hope, though pained by the delay.

Françoise confided her cause to the Holy Souls in Purgatory, beginning a novena of Stations of the Cross for them. Before the close of the novena our very honored Mother sent her word that she might enter: Sister Mary Françoise Poulaz had just died. This was in February, 1862.

Full of joy the dear aspirant made know to her mother that the doors of the Visitation were open to her. Let us listen to her artless and animated relation: "My mother was very much pleased, and still, tried enough, as I was the eldest child and just beginning to work well," but she was a good Christian. "You must tell your father," she answered. When my father came home in the evening, I said to him: "Father, I am going to enter the Convent tomorrow, they have received me at the Visitation." My father raised his hands to heaven, then letting them fall on his knees: "Oh, may God forbid! God forbid!" he exclaimed.

The next day I tied up my little belongings in a handkerchief and I came. "But your father?" "Oh, well! my father, with his 'God forbid'—he let me come." What our Sister did not say, but what is well remembered in her family, her leaving was a great grief for all.

As to her father: "Convent! Visitation!" these words did not awaken any very precise ideas. They simply signi-

fied to him separation forever! Françoise in order to spare him a painful shock left without embracing him, profiting by a moment when he was laboring in the fields. Hearing the train pass and believing that it carried his child, the good man began to weep bitterly, saying in his patois, which we translate: "My poor little one, I shall never see you again."

Her mother's pain was still greater. She cherished her eldest daughter with a love of predilection; she was resigned, but never consoled. Four years later, Mariette, the youngest daughter, came to rejoin her sister. The generous mother did not make this sacrifice without weeping, but she made no opposition. "The good God has taken them, if I had had six daughters I think they would all have gone to the Visitation." When in 1862 our Monastery opened its doors to Françoise, she was nearly twenty-one years old.

She came to make her sojourn at the foot of this "Calvary", the paths of which she had so often traced with her mother.

From her entrance, the miraculous Christ of our Cloister, which had formerly illuminated Saint Francis de Sales with its rays, (1) opened to her its great merciful arms. On the same date some valiant Christians erected on the high rocky summit of the Nivolet, the sign of the Redeemer.

Already a lover and future disciple of Jesus Crucified, Françoise entered the Convent under the auspices and in the shadow of the Cross.

(1) "Vie de St. F. de Sales," M. Hamon, Vol. 1 Ch. 5.

CHAPTER II

THE VISITATION OF CHAMBERY

> This House is a House of the Lord and to it all manner of holiness belongs. (Custom Book of the Visitation.) (1)

DOUBTLESS it will be interesting to know the Religious Community which had the happiness of possessing Sister Mary Martha and to which she consecrated, with "her person and her life," the best of her affections.

"Our Blessed Father," writes Saint Jane de Chantal, "often testified to me by letters and words, that he ardently desired the foundation of this Monastery of Chambéry because he foresaw that great fruits and utility would come from it for the accomplishment of the glory of God and the salvation of souls." (2)

It was in order to respond to this wish of Saint Francis de Sales, that the Venerable Mother de Chantal came in person to make the establishment of the new Monastery, the sixteenth of the Order. (January 17, 1624)

After twenty months of government by the Saint, several of the first Mothers of the Institute had successively the

(1) Formula of the Profession.
(2) Account of the Foundation of the Monastery written in the "Convent Book" by the hand of the Saint.

direction of the Monastery. Our Venerated Mother Marie Jacqueline Favre (1) died there holily in 1637.

In the preceding year (1636) the Visitandines were able to establish themselves definitely in the buildings constructed according to the plan of the Custom Book, living there until 1793. Savoy at this period shared the fate of France given over to the Revolution. The forty religious who were in the Monastery under the direction of the very honored Mother Marie-Scholastique Bruni, were violently expelled from their holy dwelling.

The revolutionary storm having passed, the Convents were reopened, and divine Providence permitted that our Monastery should be one of the first reconstituted.

In 1806, an ordinance of Napoleon I authorized the re-establishment of the Daughters of the Visitation of Holy Mary on condition that they should apply themselves "to the education of young girls".

It was thus, thanks to the kind offices of M. Bigex, Vicar General and future Bishop of the Diocese, that under the appearance of a boarding school the Visitation of Chambéry was restored. (September 30, 1806)

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(1) Daughter of the celebrated lawyer, Autoine Favre, and sister of the Academician, Favre de Vaugelas. She was buried in the vaults under the sanctuary of the Church, then just commenced. Thanks to the liberality of Madame Royale Christine of France, Duchess of Savoy, the construction of the Church was continued, as well as the rest of the Monastery. After the vicissitudes of the Revolutionary period, under the Restoration the buildings and the Church became the property of the Rev. Jesuit Fathers. Their College, built over the former site of the gardens of the Visitation, is now the National Lyceum. To our great regret the excavations made in 1892, at the request of our Community, to find the remains of Mother Favre, were not successful.

The little kernel, which was to give birth to the Community—formed by some Sisters of the former Visitation of Valence, to which were successively joined ten Professed of Chambéry, who had survived the Revolution—put themselves under the conduct of the very honored Mother Marie-Amédée du Noyer, Superior of the first Monastery of Annecy before the Revolution.

Established at first in a provisional house, (1) rue St. Antoine, in 1808 the Religious bought the former Priory of Lémenc, which was only a ruin. (2) With the help of Providence and the laborious assistance of Visitandines doing the work of mechanics, new buildings gradually appeared.

We cannot express the amount of self-abnegation endured by our valiant Sisters at this period of reconstruction of the Monastery, and the burden of sacrifice that weighed upon them. It is with touching gratitude that we follow the account in our Annals.

Their spirit of cordial charity and simplicity, their generous ardor in the service of God and of the Community,

(1) The former Monastery of the Visitation having been confiscated by the Nation, was sold at a nominal price, February 4, 1803.

(2) This Priory founded in 540 by two monks of the Benedictine Abbey of Ainay (Lyons), was reguarly established in the XI Century. Rodolf III, King of Burgundy, and his Queen Hermengarde were founders.

The Religious built the Church—now the Parish Church—under the invocation of St. Pierre. They officiated therein until the XVII Century, when they were replaced by the Feuillants, branch of the Benedictine Order.

At the present time a wing of our building adjoins the Church of Lémenc, whilst an inner court and our gardens partly surruond it.

The Chapel of Our Lady of Seven Dolors, built in 1835, is at the entrance of our little cemetery, which now encloses the remains of the Servant of God.

These places will be referred to in the course of the Life of Sister Mary Martha.

were faithfully transmitted to a new generation, of which the most aged among us have appreciated the great virtue.

This spirit would seem above all to revive and, as it were, to be personified in the three venerated Mothers, who were connected with Sister Mary Martha in the early years of her religious life. The remembrance of them is too closely united to that of the Servant of God to omit here a sketch of their characteristics.

The very honored Mother Marie-Pauline Deglapigny has already been mentioned. She was an elect soul. Cardinal Billiet held her in such high esteem that he proposed her as a model to our very honored Mother Marie-Alexis Blanc, when she succeeded this dear Mother in the charge of Superior in 1854.

Rare good sense, exquisite tact, admirable discretion, true humility and profound charity, charming goodness united to great firmness and an ardent zeal for the observance: she possessed all the qualities which go to form the ideal Superior. It was she who received Sister Mary Martha and had her invested with the holy habit; her name will recur in the course of our pages.

Our very honored Sister Déposée (1) Marie-Alexis Blanc, joined to the office of Assistant of the Community, the charge of Directress, (2) when Françoise Chambon was admitted to the Novitiate. One must have known this great soul in order to appreciate the happiness of the Re-

(1) Name given at the Visitation to the Superior whose term of office has expired.

(2) Mistress of Novices.

ligious who were trained by her. She entered religion at the age of twenty-eight and had hardly finished her novitiate, when through the confidence of her Superior she was appointed Directress.

A faultless demeanor, a pentrating glance and direct speech,—all in her recalled our Holy Mother de Chantal. No one was naturally less inclined to admit the extraordinary. In her eyes, as with our Holy Foundress, "an admirable sanctity was found in an exact observance accomplished with joy in the common life". It was said that Saint Peter, her baptismal patron, had obtained for the soul of his "namesake" Péronne, the future Superior, his ardent and active faith, his fiery zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

A strong woman in all the acceptations of the word, she had not eaten her bread in idleness: God seemed to choose the periods of her charge in order to multiply the labors of building and trials of every kind.

The esteem of Mgr. Leuillieux for our honored Mother Marie-Alexis Blanc, equalled that of his predecessors. "There is at the Visitation of Chambéry, a Superior who is a clever woman," said the Abbé Cotton, the future bishop of Valence, and he successively sent to the Monastery three of his spiritual daughters to be formed by her.

Our dear Sister Thérèse-Eugénie Revel (1) was devoting herself to the Community in the charge of Procuratrix when she was elected Superior in 1863.

(1) A pupil of the Sacred Heart at Chambéry, Azéline Revel was blessed in her infancy by Saint Madeleine Sophie Barat. "Take good care of this little one," recommended the venerated Foundress, "God designs to make something good of her."

She was likewise a model religious, a true column of the observance. Upon her soul, naturally timid and of great delicacy, the formation received from our Mother Marie-Alexis, whose novice she was, left the impression of a moral vigor. Her energy, all penetrated with sweetness and humility, sustained in her a continual sense of the presence of God, hence an extreme compliance with the movements of grace.

"A religious should always be surprised in an act of virtue", such was her familiar motto and practice. Her memory remains among us as the type of our "Constitution of Modesty".

From 1863 to 1887 she alternated regularly—every six years—with our honored Mother Marie-Alexis, in the charge of Superior and Directress. In the thought of God, both were destined to become the guides, the witnesses, and the confidantes of the humble Privileged One of the Savior. Both appeared to the Community as consecrated by suffering and with aureolas of sanctity.

A living crown of honor and of love, there pressed around these venerated Mothers, a reunion of generous souls filled with a spirit of devotedness and immolation, humble and childlike souls going straight to God as the pure water to the ocean, making of the Monastery a sanctuary of recollection, a cenacle of charity by union of hearts.

Poverty, this treasure of religious houses, was not wanting in the Community in 1862, no more than it had failed in the heroic times of the foundation and restoration.

Doubtless it contributed to keep up fervor and a holy joy in the midst of labor.

We mentioned in the beginning of this chapter that a prosperous boarding school of seventy or eighty pupils had laboriously occupied a number of the religious, necessitating the help of some hired girls. It was among them, according to the custom, that Françoise Chambon was placed for her first trial of several months in the house. (February, 1862.)

August 2, 1862, with a companion of the same rank, she entered the Monastery as a postulant.

CHAPTER III

THE NOVITIATE

FIRST YEARS OF RELIGIOUS LIFE

"I shall dwell in Thy Tabernacles; I shall be protected there under the shadow of Thy Wings."
(Ps. XL-45.)

THE new postulant was cordially received by the joyous group of novices, (1) but doubtless no one, in beholding the rustic and uncouth exterior of Françoise, to whom everything seemed so unusual, suspected the treasures enclosed in the soul of this young companion and the gift made to the Community in her person.

The experienced eye of the Directress saw further and with more justice. The humility of the postulant, her deep and ardent piety, impressed her from the very first; and when, with the candor and spirit of faith which always characterized her, she had gradually unveiled at the same time both the secrets of her innocent life and the attractions of grace with which the Lord favored her, Sister Marie-Alexis Blanc understood the priceless value of the soul committed to her care.

(1) Eight Choir Sisters and one Domestic Sister, already professed —one novice who was to be later our beloved Mother Jeanne-Marie-Anne Spinella.

The great docility of Sister Françoise, her total orientation towards God—fruit of preventing graces from heaven —doubtless, rendered her moral formation easy, seconded, if one may thus speak, by the direct action of the Master. As to initiation in the usages and work of the Monastery, for which her previous life in the world had so little prepared her, it must have been very laborious. So, the beginning of her religious career was not without difficulties.

At certain times there were numerous crosses, forgetfulness and awkwardness—so many occasions for the skilful Mistress to furnish salutary humiliations to her new disciple. But as, under exterior imperfections her heart was not wanting in delicacy and moral sensitiveness, the young postulant keenly felt the corrections given.

Equally painful to her also, was the separation from her family: "My thoughts always went to them", she admitted later to one of her companions, "but as soon as I perceived it, I turned my mind quickly from the thoughts, and put the bridle on it".

Likewise, the fear of a possible rejection came to torment her: "I greatly feared to be sent away, I was so stupid, I could do nothing right, I did not even know how to make the fire—it always smoked. I would constantly say: My good Jesus, keep me! Oh, my good Jesus, please, keep me".

The great good will of Françoise and her generous efforts obtained for her the reception of the holy Habit. April 29, 1863, after nine months as postulant, she received with the white veil the name of Marie-Marthe, so very

appropriate to one who was to unite to incessant daily labor a rare intensity of interior life.

The ceremony was presided over by Canon Gros, the future Bishop of Tarentaise, then Vicar General of Chambéry, and Spiritual Father of the Community. In a sermon full of piety and unction, the Abbé Lacombe, Curé of Lémenc, spoke of the happiness of a call to the religious life, the grace of corresponding to this call, and of the sublimity of the duties of our holy vocation.

Fifteen months later, (1) on the feast of Our Lady of Angels, August 2, 1864. Sister Mary Martha bound herself irrevocably to Jesus by the religious profession, at the age of twenty-three years.

What took place in this hour of "unceasing benediction" (2) between the Heart of God and that of His servant? Nothing has ever revealed it, neither in the conversations of our Sister nor in the manuscripts left by our Mothers. In view of previous graces and the superabundance of those which were to follow, it seems impossible that on this day of her mystical union, the divine Spouse was not lavish of His favors, so usual in her regard. But the "secret of the King" was jealously guarded. Without daring to condemn this reserve, we certainly regret it.

Our good Sister Marie-Jacqueline Arbet, Sister Marie Martha's companion in reception to the holy Habit, likewise pronounced the Holy Vows with her. A touching

(1) Under the government of our honored Mother Thérèse-Eugénie Revel, elected Superior in June, 1863.

(2) St. Francis de Sales, from the Book of Vows.

and unalterable union existed between these two souls of prayer, which lasted as long as their lives,—love, filled with respect and admiration on one side, and confidence on the other.

How much awkwardness repaired and how many services rendered by the dear *"profession twin"!* And in exchange, what a sincere candor and openness of heart on the part of the privileged one of the Lord!

When in after years it became almost impossible for Sister Marie-Jacqueline to work, it was in her infirmary cell that intimate and devout conversations took place between these two *"soul sisters"*, from which both drew profit and consolation.

Sister Mary Martha, so discreet and so reserved with the Community, seems to have made an exception in favor of this companion and to have confided to her more than one secret; so after her death, Sister Marie-Jacqueline, who was to follow her to heaven very soon, often said, causing us to smile: "You'll see, dear Sisters, you'll see, it will be *worse* than Blessed Margaret Mary"!

After her religious profession Sister Mary Martha was retained in the Novitiate during several years. (1) She remained under the direction of the Mistress of Novices,

(1) Until 1869. At the Visitation the Novitiate continues for some years after the Profession, made at the end of a year of probation. Sister Mary Martha's novitiate was extraordinarily prolonged. The reasons are mentioned in the manuscripts. Besides a greater facility given to our Mothers to converse with the young Professed, they considered the presence of the dear privileged soul a grace for the little flock. (A pretended necessity for a more exact exterior formation was a pretext for the real motives.) Similar reasons determined them to retain her in the charge of the pupil's refectory.

and although from this time, in view of the school work in which she passed her days, she was exempt from some of the Community exercises, she came daily, according to the Rule, to assist at the instructions and receive the advice and corrections of the Directress.

But what was going on with Sister Mary Martha during this time? The documents are few, but it is not impossible, however, to utilize the manuscripts and the information left by our old Sisters, in order to depict with some exactitude the characteristics of our Sister at this period of her life, and an additional opportunity is afforded for admiring the ways of God.

This Religious, whom Jesus was about to encompass with so much love and to inundate with the brilliancy of His light, displayed no exterior charms nor mental gifts. At the first glance, as we know, nothing was in her favor: total absence of intellectual culture; memory and imagination mediocre; rustic in manners and speech; now and then jesting—again impatient! Let us add, an ardent temperament and a will somewhat tenacious, which, united with a narrowness of views and rural ideas, were sufficient to explain the imperfections, which she never succeeded in completely eradicating, and of which God made use to veil His action in our humble Sister.

When, in her touching childlike sincerity, she complained to Our Lord: *"My good Jesus, with all Thy graces, Thou dost leave me all my defects."*

"Your imperfections," He answered her, *"are the greatest proof that what takes place in you comes from God. I shall*

never take them away: they are the covering that hides my gifts; you are very desirous to hide yourself, and I desire it still more than you do."

"It is consoling to think", a person in the world writes us in regard to this subject, "that one may love the good God and be agreeable to Him, with defects that are humiliating to one's self and very trying to others."

Sister Mary Martha's defects did not prevent her from loving the good God, and even from loving Him much. Faithful to all her duties, modest, silent, and recollected, the young Professed had a distinctive trait—a great devotion to the Passion of the Savior. She would wish to make the Holy Hour every day, and very often asked the permission for it from her Mistress, who, having already experienced the efficacy of the prayers of the humble child over the Heart of God, willingly granted her this favor. If, at times, the permission was refused, Sister Mary Martha did not insist, but withdrew with docility,—a docility, that was a consolation to the Directress, and which she loved to cite as an example to the Sisters of the Novitiate.

These defects, however, did not prevent her from loving her Sisters tenderly and from taking pleasure in their company. On days of general recreation she willingly took part in the common joy, to which her own artless mistakes often contributed.

To one of her companions who asked her for information in regard to an instruction at which she had not been able to assist: *"Sister",* Sister Mary Martha explained, *"The Preacher said if you have not charity, you are only* a

"resounding sandal", (1) her vocabulary not distinguishing between the two expressions, which to her intelligence equally signified: "nothing of any value."

Another time, when they were speaking of a Sister who had a remarkable artistic talent: *"What!"* exclaimed Sister Mary Martha, *"I thought she was an "écrivine"* (2)*—and she is a "peintresse."* (3)

Like a child she loved to laugh, and showed regret when she had to be absent from an hour of recreation, not to have been able to be with her companions and to be doing as they did. However, one day she absented herself in the fear she had of displeasing us by her appearance. A young Sister had jokingly remarked to her that she was not beautiful. "But it is not just today, my good Sister Mary Matha, did you not know it?" *"Oh, yes, I surely knew it; but you understand it is not pleasant to hear it said—Oh, little Sister, little Sister, you tease Sister Mary Martha!"*

Certainly the beauty of this daughter of the King was not exterior. But, if in certain respects God had treated her with parsimony, the Master of all gifts had reserved for Himself magnificent compensations.

Here may be noted these traits, marked with the infallible signs that reveal the divine Artist, and which reveal Him so much the better as the defects of nature have not disappeared: in this defective intelligence, how many lights and profound appreciations! in this heart with no

(1) Cymbale.
(2) Ecrivaine.
(3) Peintre.

natural culture, what innocence, what faith and piety, what humility, and what a thirst for sacrifice!

The natural simplicity of Sister Mary Martha willed by God, permitted Him to reveal Himself better to her intelligence, so utterly devoid of all profane knowledge.

After reading the *Brochure of the Holy Wounds,* a person of a very serious turn of mind subscribed to a copy of the *Complete Life of the Servant of God,* giving the following reason: "It is because in your Sister I find neither poetical flowers nor imaginary recitals. I feel that I am reading the great Saints of the past, giving the riches of practical, categorical revelations capable of saving the world: a Catherine of Sienna, a Margaret Mary."

We find, in effect,—sometimes even identical—the words of Our Lord to His great Privileged Souls. Involuntarily, the memory of the characteristics of our pious Sister presents itself, and one is struck with the extreme contrast which exists between her uncultured intelligence and her intuitions sometimes so profund! The words of the Gospel come spontaneously:

Revelasti ea parvulis!

It is to the little and the simple that Thou dost reveal Thyself, Oh my God!

CHAPTER IV

THE FIRST MANIFESTATIONS

"Sacrifice and oblation Thou didst not desire . . . Then said I: Behold I come . . That I should do Thy will, Oh, my God!"
(Ps. XXXIX, 7-8-9.)

OUR very honored Mother Thérèse-Eugénie Revel had hardly commenced her second triennial when, on the eve of Pentecost, May 19, 1866, our regretted Sister Déposée, Marie-Pauline Deglapigny, expired in her arms.

Beside the bed of agony the Community knelt in prayer. Her last moment was approaching, when, suddenly the expiring Sister cast upon the young Mother, who was leaning over her, a long look of ineffable tenderness, which seemed to say to her: "Fear not, I shall be with you, and from heaven, I will assist you!" Our very honored Mother always believed that she perceived the effect of this maternal protection in the graces with which the Savior favored our Community in the person of Sister Mary Martha.

In the course of the two years that followed the Profession, nothing unusual had marked the simple and regular interior way of our Sister. Aside from a very uncommon gift of prayer, a constantly increasing hunger and thirst for God,—an habitual recollection—there was noth-

ing particularly indicative of the extraordinary ways to come.

Shortly after this decease, in June, 1866, the young Sister, who had just entered her twenty-sixth year, began to be favored with frequent visits from Our Lord, to which were joined those of the Blessed Virgin, the Souls in Purgatory, and the heavenly Spirits.

"She enjoyed the sight of God," noted the very honored Mother Thérèse-Eugénie, several months later. "She constantly carried on a sweet intercourse with Our Lord, His Holy Mother, our Holy Founders, the Angels and Saints. God the Father, Himself, several times bowed down to her His infinite greatness, giving her Jesus, illuminating her heart with celestial light."

At the same time were manifested the first exigencies of Jesus Crucified, who seemed to wish to conduct her by an uncommon way.

Sister Mary Martha is first of all invited by Our Lord to pass nights stretched on the floor of her cell. She made this known to her Mistress, who refused the permission because it was beyond the ordinary rules. Our dear Sister humbly submitted, and let us even say that it was not without experiencing a natural satisfaction in the refusal. But Jesus showed His displeasure in henceforth depriving of all sleep, her, whom in His love He had chosen for victim.

After a long trial, our very honored Sister Marie-Alexis Blanc thought that she should no longer oppose what appeared to be truly the desire of the divine Master: she granted the permission that had been asked. Immediately sleep returned, as sweet and peaceful as that of a child.

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Shortly afterwards Sister Mary Martha is to wear a rough hair-cloth day and night—a new trial, a new manifestation of the divine Will! The Directress sometimes ordered her to leave it off—the docile child obeyed quickly and joyfully, as she wore the cilice with pain. The sovereign Master then indemnified Himself by sending to His Spouse sufferings so great that they were obliged to yield to His requirements.

Then came the Retreat of 1866. Jesus always more urgent with Sister Mary Martha in this penitential way, asked her to place a crown of thorns on her head in order that she might become, as it were, His living image, when she was extended on the floor at night with her arms in the form of a cross.

Before such an extraordinary request, our Mothers hesitated a long time. Then new sufferings came to our young Sister: intolerable headaches, an astonishingly abundant perspiration, pains all over her; they were obliged to put her to bed. For several days she took neither drink nor food.

One afternoon our Mother went to the sick Sister and asked her the cause of her condition. Timidly, and with a pained expression, the poor child answered:

"You are not willing to permit what He desires."

"Is it in regard to the Crown of Thorns?"

"Yes, Mother."

"Well, if it is really Our Lord Who requires this new kind of mortification, He must give us a sign by which we may know His Will.

"Let the perspiration in which you are, cease instantly, let your pains cease, and perfect health be restored to you at this very hour. If this grace is granted to you and is maintained eight days in succession, we shall believe that God wills it, and we will permit you to wear this crown.

"I went away," continues our Mother, "very much affected at what I had just done; I went to Vespers, the bell was ringing. Immediately after, returning to the Infirmary, what was not my surprise to find Sister Mary Martha up, and eating with a very good appetite! "Who gave you permission to get up?" I exclaimed with some vivacity.

"But, Mother, you ordered me to ask my cure of Our Lord. I did so, and He said:

"Yes, all that you may wish."

"The perspiration ceased at once, all the pains have disappeared. I got up and I am very hungry! I hope, Mother, that you will let me have some supper this evening . . . What shall I do now?"

She was wonderfully well during the whole week, except on Friday, when she suffered a little. On the remark that our honored Mother made in regard to this, the divine Master answered:

"My daughter, this day is consecrated to My sufferings, something must be granted to Me."

It was no longer possible to resist the divine Will so clearly manifested. Our Lord Himself taught His Spouse how she should weave this crown with very sharp thorns, that did not permit her to rest her head without feeling intense pain.

"Truly, like unto a virgin martyr", writes our Mother Thérèse-Eugénie, "she passes all her nights extended on the ground, her arms in the form of a cross, her brow encircled with the crown of thorns."

One evening, when it appeared to her that she could no longer endure the suffering, she complained of it to her Beloved.

"My daughter, press still harder on it," He said.

Sister Mary Martha obeyed, and her obedience, as simple as courageous, received its reward immediately, every pain disappeared instantly for this time.

An extraordinary support was necessary for the penitent life that God required of His Servant. On Holy Thursday, April 18, 1867, Our Lord had her ask her Superiors for the grace of daily Communion, which they thought good to permit to her.

This favor was then so rarely granted that, although enjoying her happiness, she felt covered with confusion in the thought that all her Sisters merited it more than she did. She was also tormented by the fear of failing in the Rule and causing herself to be remarked.

Jesus, however, did not cease the divine pursuit of His love. Not satisfied with nights passed on the ground wearing the cilice and the crown of thorns, in May, 1867, He required of our dear Sister even the sacrifice of her sleep, asking her, whilst all in the Monastery slept, to watch before the Most Holy Sacrament.

Absolute Master of all things, He gave it to be understood, that if she were not authorized by her Superior to

do this, He would withdraw the particular blessing of health, which He then was bestowing on our boarding school.

After having granted this permission to her for some days, the Sister Directress thought that she should order her novice to take a night of rest. The next day six of our pupils were ill.

Disquieted in their regard, our Mothers allowed every latitude to our Sister. They did still better: they took the part of the divine Master against their own hearts and the temptations of their child.

When, overwhelmed with sleep and fatigue, Sister Mary Martha came to the evening "Obedience" (1) beseeching them to send her to bed; they, themselves, trampling on their own natural compassion as on human prudence, led her to the tribune.

In such requirements nature hardly finds an advantage. But is not this the habitual price of divine favors?

In the silence of the night Our Lord used to communicate Himself to His Servant in a most marvelous manner. Sometimes, doubtless, He allowed her to struggle painfully during long hours against fatigue and sleep. But more frequently He took immediate possession of her and transported her in a sort of ecstasy, in which He instructed her whilst transforming her.

His possession of this humble, simple, and docile soul increased daily.

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(1) Half-past eight. The "Obedience" is a regular exercise, which twice a day, reunites all the Religious to receive the orders or recommendations of the Superior. They, then, also ask for their permissions.

CHAPTER V

SPIRITUAL GUIDES

"He hath given His Angels charge over Thee . . . lest thou dash thy foot against a stone."
(Ps. XC, 11-12.)

IN confiding His Privileged One to our Mothers, Thérèse-Eugénie and Marie-Alexis, God had chosen well. He knew what would be the extent of their fidelity in the trials which awaited them; He knew above all, their spirit of faith, their prudence, their humble submission to ecclesiastical Superiors.

The Directress and Superior of Sister Mary Martha felt very quickly, that they could not assume the complete responsibility of conducting this soul. True daughters of Holy Church, they submitted the case to the priests who were then the official guides of the Community: *Canon Bouvier,* the *Vicar General Mercier,* and the *Reverend Father Ambroise,* Capuchin.

The diocese has never lost the remembrance of these three remarkable priests. From the Visitation of Chambéry, a tribute of gratitude is here due to them.

Canon Bouvier—called in Chambéry, "the Angel of the Mountains", was Confessor of the Community during thirty-two years, 1852-1885.

No more beautiful eulogium could be given to him than that of the *"Semaine Religieuse"* in the obituary notice to the diocese of his death:

"Canon Bouvier had a hunger and thirst for the glory of God and the salvation of souls,—this was his only thought, his sole ambition. He could not understand how trifling and useless visits could be made to him, nor that anything should be sought for from him except light in doubts, counsel in the perplexities of life, consolation in sorrow, pardon from God and peace of soul in the weaknesses of human nature."

And all this no one was more able to give: to a long experience may be added in his regard, the piety of a holy priest and the learning of a renowned theologian. He inspired such perfect confidence that a number of the clergy had recourse to him, and even his bishops confided to him the direction of their conscience.

The holy Curé of Ars said more than once to persons from Savoy:

"Why do you come here? Have you not the Almoner of the Visitation of Chambéry?"

Canon Bouvier was the confident of all the graces bestowed on Sister Mary Martha, as our Mothers did nothing without his counsel and approval. But of extreme prudence and, above all, a friend of peace, he always maintained a great reserve in his judgments and appreciations, withdrawing in favor of Canon Mercier in all relating to the tribunal of conscience.

His personal conviction, however, was determined. He believed in the supernatural way of our Sister. We have

an evident proof of this in a correspondence which was committed to us after the death of its happy recipient.

This correspondence, which was closely continued during sixteen years—1867-1883, while it casts light on the motives which caused a discreet silence for a long time in regard to so many things, reveals in each line the thought of our Confessor.

"I know", he writes, "a soul to whom Jesus communicates Himself. In the course of the week I shall recommend your affairs to her. Say nothing about it, it is an absolute secret, but the thing is very certain."

"This person is one of great simplicity, consecrated to God by the vows of religion, her manner of life is almost a continual miracle. But it is impossible to give you more ample details; it is understood, that if she becomes known, the divine Savior will withdraw her from this world. She is in the ordinary way of the Saints."

The conviction of Canon Bouvier is so profound that he does not hesitate to confide to Sister Mary Martha the interests of Madame . . . and to await the answers, which she will receive from Our Lord for her intention.

As to our Sister, not wishing to betray her name, he ordinarily designates her by these expressions: *"Our holy soul", "Our little saint"*,—no one was better able to make a correct judgment of her.

Canon Mercier was Curé of Notre Dame of Chambéry, when his connection with the Visitation began. (1) In

(1) A sister of Canon Mercier, Sister Marie-Fortune, was a religious in our Monastery.

1830, he obtained a special title to our gratitude in restoring to our Mothers the miraculous Christ, a precious treasure, which had been in his Church since the Revolution.

He afterwards became Vicar General and in May, 1867, replaced, as Spiritual Father of our Community, Monseigneur Gros, appointed Bishop of Tarentaise. A period of more than thirty-seven years of ministry, during which he had enjoyed the special confidence of his Bishops and of the diocese was sufficient to inspire our Mothers with perfect security, and his name was always held in profound veneration.

As to the **Reverend Father Ambroise,** a long time Provincial and attached to the apostolic ministry nearly sixty years, his memory ever lives in all of our Savoy.

The Obituary of the Reverend Capuchin Fathers gives him this strong eulogy:

"Father Ambroise had been endowed with qualities, which make men superiors in the government of their fellow men and in the administration of business affairs. Gifted with a superior intelligence, prudent by temperament before being so by a practical knowledge of men and things, studying situations before acting, never leaving a difficulty without a solution, upright, straight-forward, impartial, knowing only duty,—in all things calm, with a marvelous self-possession."

The Visitation had the advantage of having him for Director of several remarkable Retreats and as extraordinary Confessor of the Community. He was kept informed

of all important affairs and was often consulted by our Superiors. An instance shows the interest that he bore to Sister Mary Martha and the importance that he attached to her communications: In advance of the present knowledge and practice of the devotion, the Reverend Father Ambroise had printed in Grenoble before the year 1880, the *Invocations to the Holy Wounds.*

It was to these three priests, qualified by their learning, their virtue, their experience, and their offices, that our venerated Mothers had recourse.

Aside from the contact with Sister Mary Martha in which their functions in the interior and exterior forums placed them, they had in hand the manuscripts containing the recitals, which were noted day after day.

The examen was long, serious, and complete. All the guarantees which give security in these delicate matters, were found with Sister Mary Martha: A spirit of humility, obedience, a thirst for the common life, and suffering to be excluded from it. The three examiners agreed in affirming that the way in which Sister Mary Martha was led bore the *"divine seal"*. Their conclusions confirmed the thought of our very honored Mother Thérèse-Eugénie Revel, who gives the following attestation:

"Obedience is everything for her. Candor, uprightness, the spirit of charity which animates her, her mortification, and above all her sincere and profound humility, appear to us the surest guarantees of the conduct of God over this soul. The more she receives, the more she enters into a true self-contempt, being almost habitually crushed by the fear of being in

illusion. Docile to advice given her, the words of the Priest and of the Superior have great power to restore peace to her soul. What tranquilizes us above all is her passionate love for the hidden life, her dominating need to escape from every human regard, and the terror that she has that what passes within her should be perceived."

All three counselled to continue to put into writing the communications that Sister Mary Martha declared she had received from Our Lord. However, as prudent as enlightened, they judged that these facts should be kept under the veil of secrecy until it should "please God to reveal them, Himself". (1)

For this reason the Community remained in ignorance of the signal graces with which one of its members was favored—the least suited, in a human sense, to receive them.

Likewise, holding as a sacred deposit the advice of the spiritual guides, our very honored Mother Thérèse-Eugénie Revel never omitted to note with a scrupulous exactitude, the communications of the humble Domestic Sister, to whom, moreover, Our Lord had given the order to hide nothing from her Superiors.

"Tell your Mothers to write everything that comes from Me and also what comes from you. It is not wrong that they should see your faults. I desire that you should show all that passes in you, for the good that this may do later when you will be in Heaven."

(1) They also judged that it was better not to speak about the matter to Cardinal Billiet, Archbishop of Chambéry, in view of his great age: 85 years; His Eminence being then very much disturbed by false revelations, which were troubling a diocese of Savoy.

"You must not lose courage, the work is long, but it gives Me much pleasure."

A striking detail: Sister Mary Martha could not control the work of her Superior, but Our Lord controlled. Sometimes through forgetfulness or want of time our very honored Mother omitted certain words. What a surprise when on the next day our Sister returned with this word from Jesus:

"Your Mother has not written these words. I wish that they should be written."

From such an order confirming that of the Spiritual Guides, one may imagine the religious care of our very honored Mother and the Directress to allow nothing to be lost of what was transmitted to them by their daughter. (1) This may be judged by the following declaration placed at the head of the manuscripts: **"We certify here in the presence of God and of our Holy Founders, by obedience, and with the greatest exactitude possible, what we believe to have been sent to us from Heaven by a most loving predilection of the divine Heart of Jesus, for the happiness of our Community and for the good of souls."**

Guided by the notes of the Confidantes, we shall continue affectionately to follow our Sister.

Nothing brilliant or showy need be expected. If a cloistered Religious sanctifies herself, it will not be by the grandeur nor the variety of her works, but rather by the

(1) The Directress of Sister Mary Martha, our very honored Sister Mary-Alexis Blanc, contributed half of the collections of notes. We have found billets written by her hand and textually reproduced by our very honored Mother Thérèse-Eugénie.

intensity and purity of the love with which she should illuminate the most simple things.

And when this Religious is a Visitandine, there is not even a place in her Rule for great austerities. It is known that Saint Francis de Sales in founding the Order of the Visitation realized a new conception: he created, in order to render it accessible to those of moderate health, a manner of life where the spirit of interior sacrifice, of death to self, would compensate in the eyes of God, for that which until then had been considered one of the constituent elements of all religious life, and which would have as much, if not more profit for individual sanctification as exterior austerities.

But, if in regard to austerities, Sister Mary Martha was an exception willed by God and foreseen by the Holy Founders, it may well be said that with the reserve of "supernatural" states, which remained the secret of Superiors, her virtues and her exterior life were not far distant from the humble Visitandine path. No manner of religious life offers, as to the exterior, more simple uniformity than hers. From her novitiate, Superiors appointed her to the charge of Refectorian in the boarding school. She retained this duty until the end of her days. There her life passed in abjection, the monotony of her occupations always the same, far removed from notice, even often deprived of the company of her Sisters,—but her time was not passed in idleness, as our Sister's daily labor was considerable.

To the minute and constant service required in the refectory were added the charge of the cleaning of the choir

and of several rooms and their dependencies in the school, to which must be added the gathering of the fruit, with which she was constantly charged, sometimes beginning this work before four o'clock in the morning,—labors from which she had hardly any respite except during the time of prayer.

But, under the veil of occupations uniformly repeated and without any interest from a human aspect, what an intensity of interior life and what heavenly illuminations! Our Lord seems to have drawn her to Himself very soon, having confided to her a sort of personal "Mission", unceasingly inciting her to piety, forming her to virtue, and sustaining her in her "task". These are the points which we shall try to revive in the following pages.

To follow our Sister along the lines of her great characteristics, as well as to consider the smallest traits, will give the impression of a *perfect unity.* Three words resume her interior life: the Crib, the Tabernacle, Calvary! Three words designating attractions which harmonize and unify marvelously, are: the Infant Jesus, or Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, or Jesus Crucified. But it is always the same Lord Jesus attracting this soul, making Himself at the same time Master and Model, and like a kind "Catechist," adapting Himself to the capacity of His pupil. The beauty of this life, its distinctive character, and we may add, its gracious charm, consists above all in this: the direct, constant, and loving action of Jesus.

Our Lord asks much of Sister Mary Martha, but He is generous in proportion. She has nothing: He gives. She knows nothing: He instructs. She can do nothing: He elevates, draws on, and sustains.

THE "MISSION"

FUNDAMENTAL DEVOTION TO THE HOLY WOUNDS

CHAPTER VI

THE ELECT OF JESUS CRUCIFIED

"But the foolish things of the world hath God chosen, that He may confound the wise; and the weak things of the world hath God chosen that He may confound the strong."
(1 Cor., 1-27.)

IN the month of September, 1867, the cholera broke out in our country of Savoy, claiming everywhere, but especially in Chambéry, numerous victims.

It was at this time in order to collect the poor little orphans left by the epidemic, that Canon Costa de Beauregard, a priest with a great heart, whom public opinion judged a Saint, and whose Cause has been introduced, founded the orphanage of Le Bocage. (1)

At the Visitation they were apprehensive of sickness at the return of the pupils. Our Mothers charged Sister Mary Martha to pray the divine Redeemer to be pleased to preserve the Community. Jesus leaning towards the docile mediatrix confided to her this kind answer:

"Fear nothing, you are in the Monastery as in Noah's Ark. The scourge will come even to your door, but it will not

(1) This admirable work is now directed by Mgr. E. C. de Beauregard, nephew of the Founder.

penetrate within. As to the pupils, do not retard their entrance, they will not bring the scourge, and once in the house they will be sheltered from it."

In fact, notes the Superior, the pupils arrived in numbers this year, and we had no sickness.

In giving these assurances, Our Lord demanded certain penitential practices, and especially **prayers in honor of the Holy Wounds.**

For some time, in effect, the divine Savior had been calling Sister Mary Martha to the magnificent task of making known the merits of His Passion: "He urged her to offer at every instant, the Holy Wounds to God the Father for the needs of the Holy Church and of the Community, the conversion of sinners, and principally for the souls in Purgatory." (Manuscript.)

"With My Holy Wounds", said Jesus, *"you have all the riches of heaven to bestow them upon the earth. You should make others profit by the fortune of My Holy Wounds. You must not remain poor, because your Father is very rich.* **Your riches is My Holy Passion.**

"One thing gives Me pain", He added, *"it is that there are souls that regard the devotion to My Wounds as strange and contemptible, as an unsuitable thing—it is for this cause that the devotion fails and is forgotten.*

"In Heaven, I have Saints who have had a great devotion to the Holy Wounds; but on earth hardly any one honors Me in this manner."

This complaint is only too well founded! In a world where "to enjoy" seems the sole preoccupation, how

many persons, even Christians, have, as it were, lost the sense of sacrifice. . . . Too few souls understand the Cross! Too few are given to meditate on the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, which Saint Francis de Sales calls so justly the true school of love, the sweetest and the most urgent motive of piety. (1)

Jesus does not wish that this inexhaustible mine should remain unexploited or that the fruits of His sorrows should be forgotten and lost. To impart His loving designs to the world He will choose—and is not this His custom? the most humble of instruments.

At the close of the year 1866 Sister Mary Martha's great devotion was designed. In September, 1867, during a Triduum of Grace, she will have a clearer view of the "Mission" which was to imprint on her existence a special seal and which she willingly calls her "task".

On the twenty-fifth of this month our Sister was suffering very much at the morning Obedience, (2) the Superior sent her to bed; hardly was she there when she heard the voice of Our Lord in her soul:

"I wish to keep you here for three days in honor of the three Divine Persons".

And these were for the dear Sister three days of exceptional graces. The whole splendor of the heavens came to illuminate the narrow cell into which the Holy Trinity descended.

The Glory—On the twenty-sixth, at the *Sanctus* of the Mass, Sister Mary Martha became ravished in ecstasy.

(1) "Love of God," St. Francis de Sales, 12, Chap. XIII.
(2) About noon.

God the Father presented Himself to her view above a magnificent altar, and showing her Jesus, said to her:

"I give to you Him, Whom you so often offered to Me. I associate you with My Angels. Know that you have more power than they have, because you can unceasingly offer Me the Wounds of My divine Son for sinners, and they can only contemplate them."

The Seraphim surrounded their Creator, the angelic militia appeared to be occupied only with the service of God. She saw all the Saints prostrate in profound adoration . . . Whilst she enjoyed a little of what the eye of man has never seen, what the ear has never heard, what the human intelligence cannot comprehend, our Sister has not found terms in which to explain.

The Crib—The second day, Sister Mary Martha was transported in spirit to the Stable of Bethlehem. The Infant God appeared to her placed in the Crib, Saint Joseph and the Angels contemplating Him in silent adoration.

The most Holy Virgin took Him and placed Him in her arms, saying: *"My daughter, I give Him to you as I have given Him to the world."*

Her soul then received most vivid lights on the ravishing mystery of the Nativity, on the poverty of Our Lord, the Model of religious souls, on the despoilment that Jesus requires of His Spouse, on the generosity which He demands of them that they may advance in this way of poverty and reunciation:

"They must be entirely despoiled. The religious life is not a life of joy; it is all poverty, obedience, and suffering."

At this moment, say the Manuscripts from which we shall cite textually, two roads appeared to the eyes of our Sister.

"The first is that of the soul that is entirely abandoned to the will of Our Lord. Love will crucify it, and after having passed by the same way as Jesus, it will go straight to heaven. The second is that of souls that walk by compulsion, they perform their actions because they must do them. It is not love that conducts them, they have much trouble, and hardly make any advance."

"In order to enter the first way two things are necessary:

First, *openness of heart and simple obedience;* secondly, *fidelity to refuse nothing to the lights of conscience.*

"My daughter, ask Me for this grace for all religious souls."

The Cross—The third day Sister Mary Martha saw again in a new ecstasy the heavenly Court surrounding the three divine Persons.

God the Father, drawing from Himself His Spirit as a ray of fire made a gift of It to her soul:

"There within", He affirmed, *"are light, suffering, and love! Love will be for Me, light to discern My will, suffering to endure from moment to moment"* . . . .

Then inviting her to contemplate the Cross of His Son, the heavenly Father gave her to understand better **the Wounds of Jesus for her personal good.** At the same time in a ray of light, which reached from earth to heaven, she saw her *"Mission"* clearly, and how she should make profit of the merits of the **Wounds of Jesus for the entire world.**

God the Father also made her understand the significance of these visions. The last two, figures of the *hidden life* and of the *crucified life,* were to show her the way of the first: *eternal glory.*

It may be easily understood that at the close of these great days, it was only with pain that the dear Ecstatic illuminated by divine lights, opened her eyes to earthly and sensible things. Her soul remained plunged in an interior contemplation from which nothing could distract her. According to the word of our very honored Mother, "her body only was on earth."

Three days later, October 2, Sister Mary Martha was assisting at a ceremony of reception to the holy habit, when the vault of the heavens opened and she saw the same ceremony take place in a splendor far other than that of earth. The whole Visitation of heaven was present to receive the young Novice, prophesying that she would become a fervent religious. (1) Saint Modesta (2) was also there, much satisfied to have the new Fiancée for name sake.

Our first Mothers addressing Sister Mary Martha, said to her with great joy:

"The Eternal Father has given His Son to Our Holy Order in three ways:

First—*Jesus Christ Crucified, the Cross, and to this House more particularly, His Holy Wounds.*

1. This was our dear Sister Marie-Modeste d' Agoûlt.
2. A Virgin Martyr, whose holy body reposes in a châsse under the main altar of the Visitation Church.

Second—*The Sacred Heart.*

Third—*The Infant Jesus."*

These are our family treasures. In going back to the origin of the Institute, we find in the life of Mother Anne-Marguerite Clément, (3) contemporary of Saint Jane de Chantal, these three devotions of which all the religious formed by her bore the seal.

Perhaps, and we love to believe it, it is this equally privileged soul, who in union with our **Holy Mother and Foundress,** came to remind the Elect of God of these things in placing in special relief the Passion and Wounds of the Savior.

On the twenty-third of the following October, the **very honored Mother Marie-Pauline Deglapigny** insisted on the same point. Appearing to her former daughter, she confirmed to her the gift of the Holy Wounds:

"The Visitation had already great riches, but it was not complete. For this reason happy is the day on which I left the earth, because instead of having to honor only the Heart of Our Lord, you will have (for a sensible object of your devotion) the whole of His holy Humanity, that is to say His Holy Wounds. I have asked this Grace."

Saint Francis de Sales, our blessed Father, who very often visited his dear daughter to instruct her paternally, did not fail to strengthen her in the certitude of her "Mission".

"God has chosen you to complete the devotion to the Sacred Heart; The Heart was shown to Blessed Margaret Mary and

3. Life of Mother Anne-Marguerite Clément, by Canon Sandreau.

the Holy Wounds to my little Mary Martha! . . . It is a happiness for my fatherly heart that this honor is rendered by you to Jesus Crucified."

The most holy Virgin came also, on the feast of the Visitation, to confirm the young Sister in her way. Accompanied by the Holy Founders and Saint Margaret Mary.

"I give my fruit to the Visitation as I carried It to my cousin Elizabeth", said she to Sister Mary Martha, with goodness. *"Your Holy Founder has reproduced the labors, the sweetness, and the humility of my Son; your holy Mother de Chantal, my generosity in passing over all obstacles to unite herself to Jesus and to do His holy Will; Blessed Margaret Mary reproduced the Sacred Heart of my Son in order to give Him to the world . . . and you, my daughter, are chosen to arrest the justice of God in making known the merits of the Passion and of the Holy Wounds of my unique and beloved Son, Jesus."*

But it was above all from Our Lord that His humble Servant received on several occasions, the assurance that she was very really called to revive the devotion to the redeeming Wounds.

"I have chosen you to awaken the devotion to my Holy Passion in the unhappy times in which you live.

Then showing her His Holy Wounds as a book in which He wished to teach her to read the good Master added:

"Take not your eyes from this book and you will learn from it more than the most learned. Prayer to the Holy Wounds includes everything."

He asked her to offer His divine Wounds incessantly for the salvation of the world.

"My daughter, the world will be more or less troubled according as you will perform your task. You are chosen to satisfy my justice.

"I wish that by this devotion, not only the souls with whom you live should become saints, but also many others.

"I have chosen you to make known the merits of My Holy Passion for all; but I wish that you should always remain hidden. It is for Me to make known later that it is by this means that the world will be saved—and also by the hands of My Immaculate Mother."

In order to excite the zeal of Sister Mary Martha, Our Lord was pleased to expose to her the advantages of this devotion, the inappreciable treasures of these sources of life.

"My daughter, each time that you offer to My Father the merits of My divine Wounds, you gain an immense fortune.

"My Father is pleased in the offering of My Sacred Wounds and the Dolors of My Divine Mother. To offer Him My Wounds is to offer Him His glory, it is to offer Heaven to Heaven."

"One of My creatures betrayed Me and sold My blood, but you can so easily redeem It drop by drop. A single drop is sufficient to purify the earth and you do not think of It! You do not know Its price!"

Showing His beloved these "fountains of salvation" as suspended between heaven and earth:

"My daughter, recognize the treasure of the world—the world does not wish to recognize It."

Jesus urges her—and urges us with her—to come to this treasure with confidence:

"Let him who is in need come with faith and confidence, let him draw constantly from the treasure of My Passion.

"Behold wherewith to pay all debts. Fear not to show My Wounds to souls. The way of My Wounds is a simple and easy way of going to heaven. In the contemplation of My Wounds everything is found for one's self and for others."

Jesus multiplies encouraging promises:

"I will grant all that is asked of Me through devotion to the Holy Wounds. Those who will honor them shall have a true knowledge of Jesus Christ.

"My daughter, where are Saints made unless in My Holy Wounds? From My Wounds come forth fruits of sanctity. Gold purified in the crucible becomes more beautiful, likewise you must put your soul and those of your Sisters into My Sacred Wounds; there they will become perfect as gold in the furnace."

The Holy Wounds have wonderful efficacy for the conversion of sinners. One day Sister Mary Martha seized with anguish at the thought of the crimes of the earth, exclaimed:

"My Jesus, take care of Thy children, do not regard their sins."

The divine Master in answering her appeal taught her the aspiration:

"My Jesus pardon and mercy through the merits of Thy Holy Wounds."

Then He added: *"Many will experience the efficacy of this aspiration."*

"I desire", He declared at another time, *"that Priests should often give it to their penitents in the Holy Tribunal."*

The sinner who will say the following prayer:

"Eternal Father, I offer Thee the Wounds of Our Lord Jesus Christ to heal the wounds of our souls", *will obtain his conversion.*

The Holy Wounds are a balm and a comfort in suffering:

"This aspiration should often be repeated near the sick: "My Jesus, pardon and mercy through the merits of Thy Holy Wounds. "This prayer will solace soul and body."

The Holy Wounds give assurance of a good death:

"There will be no death for the soul that will expire in My Wounds, They give true life."

CHAPTER VII

MANIFESTATION OF THE HOLY WOUNDS

> "It cannot be described how ardently the Savior desires to enter into our souls by this love of sorrowing complacency. He says in the canticle:
>
> 'Open to Me, My Sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled, for my head is full of dew and my locks of the drops of the night.'
>
> What is this dew and what are the drops of the night but the pains and sorrows of His Passion?
>
> (Saint Francis de Sales: "Love of God", Book V, ch. 5.)

THE object of the devotion is now about to appear to us in a more concrete manner.

Jesus *shows* His *Wounds* in renewing calls, which—aside from His Confidante—are addressed to all souls. How vivifying it is to place one's self with her under the radiance of the redeeming Wounds! How fruitful it is to listen to the appeals of the Savior!

"After My Holy Mother", He said to Sister Mary Martha, *"no soul has had as you have had, the grace to contemplate My Holy Wounds day and night."*

We read, in effect, from the pen of our very honored Mother:

"Our Lord showed her His divine Wounds daily. They appeared sensibly to the eyes of her soul, sometimes *resplend-*

ent, intoxicating her with joy, again all *blood stained,* which occasioned her an inexplicable martyrdom:

"I wish that you should see them in this manner, that you may the better comprehend what I have done in coming on the earth to suffer for you."

In this marvelous manifestation the Savior sometimes presented Himself to His Spouse with the *ensemble* of His adorable Wounds, showing her His flesh torn in shreds: He said to her:

"You will everywhere find Wounds in your Spouse. You must draw from them for the world. This is your work. I show this to all souls, but only a few pay attention to it. As for you, My daughter, embrace Me from My Crown of Thorns to My feet, and remain there."

Sometimes, He showed her only one Wound separate from the others; thus, one day, He showed her His right Foot, saying:

"How greatly you should respect this Wound and hide yourself therein like a dove!"

At another time it will be His left Hand:

"My daughter, take from my left Hand My merits for souls in order that they may be at My right for eternity . . ."

His two adorable Feet:

"Bring to Me there all My creatures . . . these openings are large enough to shelter them all . . . The Wounds of My Sacred Feet are an ocean." (1)

1. "Mother, what is an ocean?" our illiterate Sister afterwards asked her Superior.

His Head crowned with thorns:

"My daughter, there, you will learn submission of judgment."

The Wound of His divine Side:

"There, you must learn meekness and humility."

Consolation and a vehement love penetrated the soul of our Sister. She could no longer take her eyes from the Holy Wounds, and our sweet Savior was pleased to see her in this mute ecstasy.

"My daughter, in contemplating Them you console Me . . . in My turn, I will console you by the sight of My glory during all Eternity."

THE CROWN OF THORNS AND THE WOUNDS OF THE HEAD

A historian of Saint Jane de Chantal (2) describing the rule of life which she had adopted before her entrance into religion, tells us that each evening she placed herself *"in one of the Wounds of Our Lord"* and that on Friday she chose *"the scars of His adorable Head."*

It seems well to recall here the devotion of our Holy Foundress to the wounded Head of Jesus, for from Sister Mary Martha, also, the divine Master claims for His august Head crowned with thorns, a very special worship of veneration, reparation, and love.

The Crown of Thorns was for Him a cause of particularly cruel sufferings:

2. Life of St. de Chantal, Maupas.

"My Crown of Thorns made Me suffer more than all My other Wounds," (1) He confided to His Spouse. *"It was My most cruel suffering after the Garden of Olives. In order to relieve It, you must observe your Rule well."*

It is for the soul faithful to its imitation, a source of merits:

"Behold," He said, *"this Head which has been pierced for your love and by the merits of which you will one day be crowned. It is the Crown of Thorns which will obtain for you a crown of glory."*

It is the choice gift which Our Lord presents to His friends:

"My Crown of Thorns I give to My privileged ones. It belongs to My Spouses. It is the glory of the Blessed, but for My beloved ones on earth, it is a suffering."

At the place of each thorn, our Sister saw dart forth a ray of glory impossible to describe.

"My true servants try to suffer as I did, but none can attain the degree of suffering that I have endured."

From these souls Jesus solicits a more tender compassion for His adorable Head. Listen to this cry of the heart that He addressed to Sister Mary Martha in revealing to her His blood stained Head, all pierced, and expressing a suffering such as the poor child had no words to describe:

1. A close examination of the wounds of the Head, on the Holy Winding Sheet of Turin, gives light on the revelatons of Our Lord to the little Domestic Sister of the Visitation of Chambéry, Sister Mary Martha Chambon:
"My Crown of Thorns made Me suffer more than all My other Wounds."
(Bulletin of St. Suaire, June, 1925.)

"Behold Him Whom you seek! Behold in what a state He is! Look . . . take out the thorns from My Head in offering to My Father the merits of My Wounds for sinners . . . . Go, seek souls!"

We see in these appeals of the Savior ever repeated, an echo of the eternal "Sitio," the preoccupation of saving souls: "Go, seek souls!"

Behold a striking contrast: Jesus presents Himself now to the ravished eyes of our young Sister with this same Crown all radiant with a sparkling glory:

"My Crown of Thorns will illumine heaven and all the Blessed!"

The happiness of the just, the Holy Crown is, on the contrary, an object of terror for the wicked. It was of this that Sister Mary Martha had a passing glimpse in a picture offered to her for her contemplation by Him Who loved to instruct her in unveiling the mysteries of the "Beyond."

All illuminated with the splendors of this divine Crown, appeared the Tribunal where souls are judged. Souls were passing continually before the Sovereign Judge. Souls that had been faithful during life cast themselves with confidence into the arms of the Savior. . The others, at the sight of the holy Crown and at the remembrance of the love of Our Lord that they had despised, precipitated themselves into the eternal abyss.

This vision was so impressive that the poor child, in relating it, still trembled in fear and terror.

THE WOUND OF THE HEART

If the Savior discovered thus to the lowly Sister all the beauties and all the riches of His divine Wounds, with what tenderness did He not open to her the treasure of His great Wound of love!

But here, and more perhaps than elsewhere, love dominates complaint. The invitation to love precedes the invitation to suffer. It is true that one calls upon the other: does not true love expand in sacrifice and reparation?

"Behold the Source whence you should draw all," said Jesus to Sister Mary Martha, in showing her His Wounds in a luminous splendor, and that of His Sacred Heart shining among the others with an incomparable brilliancy:

"Come here to the Wound of My divine Side . . . It is the Wound of Love whence issue very vivid flames!"

At the same time He made her share in His immense desire to see diffused the grace with which His Heart overflows.

"Place your lips here in order to draw forth Charity and spread it throughout the world. Put in your hand to take My treasures . . . I can no longer contain them so great is My desire to bestow them.

"Come to receive the pouring out of My Heart, which desires to relieve its excess. I wish to bestow upon you My abundance.

But first of all, Jesus invites to union with His Heart, the condition of every apostolate. He does it at every instant under divers forms, with accents that touch souls, disconcert the timid, and condemn the tepid.

On a feast of the Sacred Heart, showing to His Elect One this "Wound of love" very wide open, He said to her:

"Behold where you are! . . . behold where I place you!

"Here is your center, no one can prevent you from loving It, nor make you love It unless your heart correspond. All that creatures may say cannot take your treasure from you, your love! I wish you to love Me without human help."

On another day:

"Do as the butterfly; fly here into My Heart! When a soul is deeply buried in the Wound that it honors, it remains there." . . .

"Oh, my Jesus, couldst Thou give me a place that would suit me better?"

Again—*"If you wish to enter into the light of the Lord, you must penetrate into My divine Heart . . . If you wish to know the extent of the compassionate mercy of Him Who loves you so greatly, you must place yourself upon the opening of My Sacred Heart with respect and humility."*

"I wish that all your hearts would enter into Mine. It is there that your Father, Saint Francis de Sales, drew his maxims. It is in My Heart that peace is found."

This Sacred Heart, open to its faithful disciples as an asylum, wishes also to find a refuge in ours, and a place of repose. Let us hear these appeals addressed to Sister Mary Martha:

"Do you love Me?"

"Yes, good Master, I love Thee!"

"Well, lovers should not leave the Beloved all alone."

"Oh, My Spouse, My Heart knows not where to seek repose . . . I have chosen a victim in whose heart I would wish to take My rest: what ingratitude if I am repelled!"

"Oh well, my Jesus, since you wish to come and repose within me, purify me . . . I shall do as the dove: I shall hide myself in the holes."

"Yes, My daughter, do as the dove, enter My Heart . . . Come take for yourself and for souls. Rejoice in My Heart for all who do not!"

To this love of our poor hearts Jesus attaches so much value, that He goes so far as to beg it . . .

Appearing one day in all the beauty of His Resurrection, He said to his Beloved:

"With this, My daughter, I beg as a poor man would! I call my children one by one . . . I await them . . ."

Behold Him truly taking upon Himself the aspect of a beggar, full of sadness at the thought of His tenderness so greatly ignored:

"I beg for perfect love, but the greatest number, even among Religious souls, refuse Me this love! My daughter, love Me above all things, for Myself."

Pointing out to her Saint Margaret Mary, whose gaze was "devouring" the Heart of Jesus: *"She loves Me with this pure love, for Myself alone."*

And Sister Mary Martha tried to love with this same love. Like an immense source of fire the Sacred Heart attracted

her to Himself by unspeakable ardors. She darted towards her Beloved in the bursts of love that consumed her, but which at the same time left in her soul a sweetness all divine.

"If you saw how fully you possess My Heart", said the good Master, *"this view would astonish you! You are the beloved of My Heart. Henceforth, you will no longer love nor breathe except by My Heart."*

CHAPTER VIII

RESPONSE OF SISTER MARY MARTHA TO THE DESIRES OF JESUS

> "I came not to you in loftiness of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of Christ. For I judged not myself to know anything among you but Jesus Christ and Him crucified."
>
> (1 Cor. II-1-2.)

TOUCHED to the most intimate depths of her being, our dear Sister allowed herself to be penetrated with an ever increasing love for the adorable Wounds of our Savior.

"Love has such strength," says Saint Francis de Sales, *"that it attracts to itself the qualities of the object loved."*

With Sister Mary Martha, the transformation produced by this sorrowful complacency was so profound, that sometimes she believed herself truly united with Jesus suffering. She seemed to be one with Him, and the Wounds of her Spouse seemed to become her own.

Her ardent desire was to arouse in the universe sentiments of love and gratitude, which these Holy Wounds should inspire, ever ready herself to give her life for the extension of a worship that she wished to be immense, passionate, and unlimited.

Personally, our Sister had responded to the call of the Divine Master in a practical, official manner.

October 17, 1867, our very honored Mother Thérèse-Eugénie drew up, in effect, in the name of her dear child, the following articles:

"I Sister Mary Martha Chambon, promise our Lord Jesus Christ to offer myself every morning to God the Father, in union with the Divine Wounds of Jesus Crucified, for the salvation of the whole world and for the welfare and perfection of my Community.

"I shall adore Him in all hearts that receive Him in the Holy Eucharist . . . I shall thank Him that He is pleased to enter so many hearts that are so little prepared.

"I promise Our Lord to offer every ten minutes—with the help of His grace and in the spirit of obedience—the divine Wounds of His Sacred Body to the Eternal Father . . . to unite all my actions with His Holy Wounds, according to the intentions of His Adorable Heart, for the triumph of the holy Church, for sinners and the souls in Purgatory, for all the needs of my Community, for those of the Novitiate, the school, and in expiration for all the faults committed there. All this through love without obligation of sin (in case of forgetfulness).

The invocation: **"Eternal Father, I offer Thee the Wounds of Our Lord Jesus Christ to heal the Wounds of our souls",** is the formula of this offering.

Sister Mary Martha had promised to recite it every "ten minutes", but hardly a moment of the day passed

in which she did not repeat it, adding the second invocation:

"My Jesus, pardon and mercy through the merits of Thy Holy Wounds."

The existence of our dear Sister thus became at the same time a continual immolation, an uninterrupted prayer: union with God and profound recollection were imprinted upon her countenance. In seeing her one was struck, by her eyes nearly always closed, by her lips unceasingly murmuring a prayer.

However, if her ardor ever relented, if the precious offerings rose less frequently from her heart to Heaven, Jesus did not delay to present Himself to her in the pitiful state to which our iniquities had reduced Him; and in showing her His Wounds He made loving reproaches to her:

"They are always looking at you even when you forget Them, you who should always look at Them . . . They are all newly made, you must offer Them as if for the first time . . . I have shown Them to you so often that this should suffice for you; but no, I must always reawaken your fervor."

It was with three strands of sharp thorns in His Crown that the Savior came one day to excite the lively compassion of His Spouse. The sight was so painful and so touching that Sister Mary Martha could not but exclaim:

"Oh, my Jesus, give me then a share in this frightful torment!"

Her prayer was immediately heard. Pains in her head of untold violence took possession of her to such an extent that she could hardly endure them.

Presenting Himself to her as in a picture:

"You must copy Me," He one day supplicated with an accent of intense tenderness and ardent desire. *"You must copy Me! Painters make portraits almost like the originals; but here it is I Who am the painter and Who will make My image in you if you will look at Me."*

Our Sister yielded with docility to the action of the Master, for some time afterwards He asked her:

"My daughter, do you wish to be crucified, or would you rather be glorified?"

"Good Master, I should love rather to be crucified."

It was above all at the period of our annual retreat that our fervent Sister received, with marks of tenderness from her Divine Spouse, more urgent calls to the devotion to the Holy Wounds and to the crucifixion. While she applied herself to her "task", the action of Our Lord pursued her, sweetly but irresistibly.

In the retreat of 1867, we note this invitation—as beautiful as impressive:

"I would wish to see all My Spouses crucifixes!"

In the following year on the first day of her solitude, (1) Sister Mary Martha heard the Eucharistic Jesus say these loving words to her:

(1) Retreat of eight or ten days made by each religious in private.

"I give Myself to you to make the retreat. Retire within your heart and close the door that we may be 'heart to heart'; this is Heaven."

Afterwards, presenting to her the image of the Crucifix:

"Behold the little Infant Jesus in your heart—see the condition of His beautiful body . . . You must retrace in your soul the anguish and distress in which you see Me."

Evening having come as our Sister lay down on the floor of her cell there to pass the night, her Divine Sacrificer caused her to hear these words:

"Say to Me now: 'Jesus, behold Thy victim'."

At first her soul shuddered and repelled this vision of suffering. Nature revolted from the cross that was offered to her. It was a terrible struggle until midnight, but then, Jesus appeared to His Servant, His brow torn and bloody, His whole body crushed, His face soiled, bruised, furrowed with tears:

"My daughter," He said to her, **"your Superior has given you the Crucifix for retreat book . . . behold it!"**

After several hours of silent contemplation Our Lord made her feel the pain of two Wounds which covered the top of His head with blood, and of that which He received in His most august Face when the executioners struck Him a hard blow. All night she was under the most painful impression of these three fearful bruises:

"You are a martyr of Jesus Christ," the Savior Jesus declared to her. *Be ready to receive all My Wounds one after the other. You will be a martyr who shall live forever.*

From time to time, with a truly divine delicacy, our Adorable Master recompensed the efforts and the zeal of His humble Spouse.

In September, 1867, like the Sorrowful Virgin, Sister Mary Martha had the signal privilege of receiving into her arms the most Sacred Body of Jesus Christ. At the same time she received this lesson:

"In order to contemplate the Wounds of Jesus well, there must be no other attachment in the heart, not even the smallest voluntary imperfection."

Our Sister held this precious deposit from the end of Vespers until a quarter to six—that, is for more than two hours. She contemplated these adorable Wounds one by one, in the order and with the sentiments as taught her by His Divine Mother, offering them incessantly to God the Father for the salvation of the world.

"The Creator appeared much pleased," affirmed the happy Privileged One, *to receive His Divine Son from such miserable hands!"*

At another time, Retreat of September, 1881, she found herself in a very painful interior state: her heart remained dry, her prayer was without unction:

"My sweet Jesus," she said, *"I wish in spite of all, to perform my charge, which is to offer unceasingly Thy Divine Wounds."*

Sister Mary Martha prayed thus during three-quarters of an hour . . . then Jesus came to her:

"My daughter, do you believe that I could remain deaf to the souls that invoke My Holy Wounds? I have not the ungrateful heart of a creature: I keep count of all! My Heart is sensitive! The Wound of My Sacred Heart opens wide to enclose all your needs!"

At that instant she beheld the Wounds of the Savior as so many suns of which she could not sustain the brilliancy; the Crown of Thorns and the Heart above all appeared a furnace of light.

"My daughter, behold what is yet reserved for you to see . . . After having invoked them well during life, you will contemplate them thus during all Eternity."

....*"Oh, Sister,"* said the pious child to our very honored Sister Déposée Thérèse-Eugénie, *"it is so beautiful that it cannot be described; nothing can be said of it, gold and precious stones are nothing!"*

CHAPTER IX

THE STIGMATAS

HOLY COMMUNION THE ONLY FOOD OF SISTER MARY MARTHA

"Let no man be troublesome to me: for I bear the marks of the Lord Jesus Christ **in my body.**"
(Gal. VI, 17.)

IS it astonishing that the Divine Master should imprint the exterior signs of the Crucified Love on this victim, chosen for a redeeming mission, associated in a special manner with the work of Our Lord Jesus Christ?

"You are a martyr of Jesus Christ," He declared to her one day. *Prepare to receive all My Wounds one after the other."*

June 12, 1874, at the dawn of the feast of the Sacred Heart, Sister Mary Martha was extended on the ground, whilst she was offering herself to God the Father in such a close union with His Divine Son that she seemed to have passed into Him. Our Lord Jesus Christ appeared to her . . . She immediately felt the impression as of a burning iron that transpierced her left foot.

Our two former Mothers, Marie-Alexis Blanc and Thérèse-Eugénie Revel, examined the Wound: it was rather deep, of about the size of a dime, and very painful.

Fifteen days later the Elect of Christ received a similar wound in the right foot. So great was the pain, this time, that Sister Mary Martha could hardly walk.

The poor child was seized with a mortal disquietude fearing that this new favor would be observed in the Community. She supplicated Jesus to withdraw it from her or at least to render it entirely interior, but she did not obtain her request for several months.

Every Wednesday the blood began to flow from these wounds, not ceasing until Friday evening. At first, it was so copious that her shoes were all filled with it. (Deposition of our very honored Mother Thérèse-Eugénie.)

In the month of November, Jesus finally yielded to the urgent prayer of His Spouse, leaving no marks of the wounds except a little opening from which the blood oozed lightly on Fridays.

In May of the following year, the stigmata recommenced to pour out an abundance of blood three times in the week. But by new and more ardent supplications, Sister Mary Martha obtained from the Savior that He would change this suffering into another less apparent. (August, 1875.)

The Wounds closed, even the scars disappeared. The blood rushed violently to her head, causing her intense suffering. These physical pains, however, were nothing when compared with the moral tortures that she had to

endure . . . then she experienced the truth of what was said to her one day by our Saint Sister Margaret Mary:

"To have Jesus Crucified in one's heart is a still greater grace than the stigmata; it is more hidden."

And under this form, Sister Mary Martha was "stigmatized" as few souls will ever be.

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"Lord, I know that Thou canst do all things and no thought is hidden from Thee.

(Job. XLII, 2)

By another means not less efficacious, the Divine Master, at the same time, strengthened His hold on the soul of His Spouse.

As if to show her that He would suffice to her for all things, He wished that for more than four years she should have no other food than the Holy Eucharist. He very gradually led her to this extraordinary state.

Our Sister could be followed nearly day by day through the months of preparation. We shall limit ourselves to the last notes recorded in the manuscripts:

"On January 25, 1869, she took nothing, not even a drop of water. On the 26th and 27th, devoured by thirst, she took a little fresh water. On the 28th, in the afternoon, we gave her a little cup of sugared water, which immediately caused her great pains in the stomach.

On the following days she took only some water, with the exception of one day on which she obtained permission from Our Lord to go to the refectory in order to tranquilize those who were disquieted in her regard.

Mardi Gras, February, 1869, she came with the Sisters to the Assembly Room to take part in the recreation, and drank a cup of café au lait . . . She took nothing afterwards until the first Sunday of Lent when she took a bouillon that made her sick.

At the beginning of Lent we felt obliged to give her, through compassion, once or twice a week, a little sweetened wine or some other stimulant; but it could not be continued. The dear child was obliged to content herself, now and then, with some drops of fresh water. Soon the absolute Master of souls and bodies retrenched even this light relief.

Henceforth, and this was to continue for four years and a half, the Holy Communion was to be absolutely her only nourishment. "Our little Sister," writes the Superior, "enjoys robust health, she is even better than when she took her meals as all the others. She washes, she polishes the floors, it is wonderful! . . . "

At manifestation she joyfully declared:

"I feel no weakness; I have done my work today with much ease! I have much more strength than usual."

And in spite of the hard labor of the day, she sacrificed her sleep in the silence of the night at the feet of Jesus in the Holy Sacrament.

However, Sister Mary Martha sometimes felt her strength fail, notes the manuscript. Our Lord permitted this for the pleasure He experienced in seeing her run to Him in all the simplicity of her soul, to see her prostrate before the choir gate, humbling herself, kissing the ground, and complaining lovingly:

"See, my Jesus, I am as weak as this dust."

Jesus could not resist the humility of such a prayer. He opens His Sacred Heart all radiant with light:

"Behold your strength . . . Come and receive Me. I shall be as oil poured out on your members to fortify you."

A new blood seemed then to circulate in her veins, communicating to her a marvelous vigor. She runs to her work, faces the overwork without trouble, with the help of her Beloved.

Sometimes the victim of Jesus experienced the "martyrdom of hunger". Her divine Master judges well in His mysterious designs, to allow her to endure these devouring tortures, but in indicating to her the source of efficacious help:

"When you are hungry, pray whilst pressing your lips upon My Heart."

Then when she had thus suffered for a long time, content with the fidelity of her soul, He showed her His Wounds, *"He inundates with Himself"* His little servant, He draws her to His Heart:

"Come, My beloved, take nourishment from My Wounds. Take . . . it will be useless for you to eat, you will always

be hungry, but never satisfied. My daughter, do as the little bird. I feed it; no one prepares anything for it. Come, take as it does; be nourished from My Wounds."

"It seems to her that she drank long draughts from the Sacred Side of Jesus. All earthly joys are nothing compared with the joy which was hers at these moments. It is a joy that she could not experience when she wished . . . neither can she escape from it when God gives it to her . . . this joy follows her everywhere, her whole being is filled with it." (Manuscript.)

It was, however, a very great pain for Sister Mary Martha to realize that she was out of the common way. She confided this to her Holy Founder:

"My Father, do not permit that I should lose myself in doing any other thing than what you have marked."

This tender Father reassures her:

"My daughter, follow well the way that Jesus has traced for you: it is your Rule."

Not yet satisfied she continues her complaints:

"My God, I suffer so much at not going to the Refectory with the others."

"Know, my daughter," answered the Savior, *"that I have My time for giving My graces. When you went to the Refectory I gave them for the accomplishment of the Rule; now, it is in another manner. In a Community one's own way must be followed without regarding that of others."*

For more than four years Sister Mary Martha lived in this truly miraculous manner, then Our Lord permitted

her to resume little by little her ordinary meals. She asked permission for it nearly every day.

Finally, yielding to her supplications (September, 1873), her Divine Master permitted her to return to the Refectory.

"For some months she had made this request to us," relates the faithful narrator of her life, "we always answered: We must have proof that Jesus wills it. We shall give you a little food for eight days, if it agrees with you, we shall recognize the Will of God. But the simple little soup that she took caused her such horrible suffering that we went no further . . ."

"On September 20, 1873, in order to assure ourselves of the Divine Will, we resumed the trial; the nourishment did not disagree with her. After some further days of trial she resumed her place in the Refectory. She went there for all the meals, unspeakably consoled in being able to follow the Community."

But of her "Eucharistic régime", there remained to her a total detachment from all that was not God. She no longer belongs to herself; she belongs to Jesus. With Him she belongs to souls; in their favor she fulfills her *"Mission"*.

CHAPTER X

THE DEVOTION TO THE HOLY WOUNDS AND THE COMMUNITY

> "The Wounds of Jesus are so many eloquent mouths that pray for us to the Eternal Father, asking not vengeance, but mercy."
> (St. Antoninus.)

THE "Mission" of Sister Mary Martha was in the first place, continually to make appeal to the merits of the Holy Wounds of Our Lord Jesus Christ for the needs of the Church militant and the Church suffering, and particularly for the Community. To this she was heroically faithful. We have said this before, and we shall have occasion to show it more in detail.

As to propagating throughout the whole world a movement of souls towards the Divine Wounds, *Sources of Salvation,* this regarded the future, and could not be realized during the lifetime of our Sister: the touching appeals of Jesus, His merciful promises, could not be known until after the death of His Elect One.

"Your way, Our Lord had said to her in the days of her religious youth, *is to make Me known and loved, above all in the future . . . Some day I shall make all of these things known, and the graces that I bestowed on you, so miserable, shall be clearly seen."*

"A long time will be required for the establishment of this devotion," He added. *"You must work at it with courage."*

The veil of the future seemed to be partially raised before the eyes of the humble Domestic Sister.

One day in 1868, when before the Blessed Sacrament, she saw what seemed to be a rich garment from which each one in turn could take pieces for her own use: *"I did not understand what My good Master meant by this,"* she afterwards admitted to her Superior.

If it was not reserved for our Sister to assist here below at the magnificent development of a devotion so dear to her soul, she, at least, had the joy of seeing it solidly established in the Community. This was only justice . . . Here the duty of gratitude obliges our appreciative hearts to proclaim aloud the ineffable tenderness of the Savior in our regard.

Without any merit on our part, His regard of predilection had been for a long time fixed upon the humble family for which He reserved choice graces in consideration of His Privileged Spouse. He Himself manifested this to His Confidante:

"For a long time I have loved you with a love of predilection. I have designs upon this Community that you do not know; but I govern it as a Father."

The Superiors—then the only depositaries of these merciful designs—knew how to recognize the precious gift that was so liberally offered to us, and zealously employed themselves in responding to the desires of the Divine Master.

The great Miraculous Crucifix of the ancient Church of Saint Dominic of Chambéry, dating, according to the chronicles of 1672, from time immemorial.

In exchange for exceptional graces, Jesus asked only two practices of the Community. We shall say a passing word of each: The *"Holy Hour"* and the *"Rosary of the Holy Wounds"*. (1)

At the time of the cholera of 1867, Our Lord testified the desire that on every Friday the Holy Hour should be made by five Sisters, each charged to honor one of His Wounds.

"The Superior," said the good Master, *"will choose the Sisters, assigning to each one the Wound that she is to honor. My divine Feet will count for one Wound; My Crown of Thorns will be the fifth.* (2). *As what I ask is not within the Rule, the Sisters chosen for this Holy Hour may make it in their cells."*

The most holy Virgin united her request to that of her Divine Son, by these words, manifesting a sorrowful regret:

"There is no House in the world where the Holy Wounds of Jesus are particularly honored on Friday evening. (1) During this hour, you must contemplate these holy apertures and bury yourself therein."

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(1) This requires an explanation: Our Lord had asked positively only the invocations to the Holy Wounds. In order to facilitate the recitation our Mothers arranged them in the form of a Chaplet. The Divine Master was pleased to manifest His satisfaction many times and to ask a continuance of this pious practice.

(2) This manner of praying does not at all mean to change the number nor the traditional order of the Five Wounds honored by the Church in the Feast hitherto consecrated to this mystery, but it adds the worship of the Holy Crown of Thorns and of the Wounds it caused in the Sacred Head of Our Lord. (Observation of His Grace Msgr. Castellan, Archbishop of Chambéry, in the "Semaine Religieuse" of Chambéry, September 13, 1924.)

(1) This regards the Holy Hour made in the night, not that which is made in some Communities between three and four o'clock in the afternoon.

The desires of Jesus and Mary were realized. During many years five of our Sisters had, after Matins, the happiness of thus honoring the Holy Wounds of Our sweet Savior.

Without sharing in the confidence of the graces received, the Sisters of the Novitiate, to which Sister Martha still belonged, were called, as were those of Paray, to the honor of offering to Jesus the first fruits of the homage that He so urgently demanded. Our very honored Sister Marie-Alexis, Mistress of Novices, had her little flock draw pious billets upon which she had written with her own hand, the different Wounds of Our Lord. Several Sisters preserved these billets until death, never ceasing to honor the Wound which had fallen to them.

As to the happy Privileged Sister, called upon to contemplate day and night the Wounds of the Redeemer, Mary taught her how she should accomplish this devout exercise:

"My daughter," she said to her, *"the first time that I contemplated the Wounds of My dear Son, was when His most Holy Body was placed in my arms. I meditated upon His sufferings trying to make them pass into My own heart . . . I considered His divine Feet, one after the other . . . then I went to His Heart, where I beheld the great opening—so deep for my Mother's heart . . . I contemplated the Left Hand, then the Right, and afterwards the Crown of Thorns. All these Wounds pierced My heart. Behold my Passion! Seven swords are in my heart, and it is through my heart that the Sacred Wounds of my Divine Son must be honored. Through humility I began by the Sacred Feet of Jesus, and I desire that you should follow the same order."*

It was about this time (1868), that in order to enter into the intentions of Our Lord, Superiors established the daily recitation of the "Rosary of the Holy Wounds." (1)

It was not without difficulty that Superiors were able to adopt this practice. As at Paray, through an extreme zeal for the Rule, several objections were made. Besides, some were suspicious regarding the origin of this new prayer: it might appear singular to the elder Sisters that the attraction of a simple little domestic novice to a special devotion should have the force of law in the Community.

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(1) In the beginning, the Rosary was recited in the following manner with the beautiful inspired prayer of a priest in Rome:

On the Cross: "O Jesus, divine Redeemer, be merciful to us and to the whole world. Amen."

"Strong God, holy God, immortal God, have mercy on us and on the whole world. Amen."

"Grace and mercy, my Jesus, during present dangers; cover us with Thy precious Blood. Amen."

"Eternal Father, grant us mercy through the Blood of Jesus Christ, Thy only Son; have mercy on us, we beseech Thee. Amen, Amen, Amen."

On the large beads: Eternal Father, I offer Thee the **Wounds** of our Lord Jesus Christ—To heal the wounds of our souls.

300 days indulgence each time.

On the small beads: My Jesus, pardon and mercy—Through the merits of Thy **Holy Wounds.**

300 days indulgence each time.

Sacred Penitentiary, January 16, 1924.

These last two invocations were indicated by Our Lord Himself, and to them He attached beautiful promises.

At first the grant of Indulgence was limited to the Order of the Visitation, but in virtue of an Indult of the Sacred Penitentiary, January 16, 1924, the Indulgence is extended to all the faithful to perpetuity. The Leaflets were first printed in Grenoble (by Allies) by the care of Rev. Father Ambrose, Capuchin, in 1880, and were even translated into Italian.

Any Chaplet may be used for the recitation of this Rosary, nor it is necessary to hold the Chaplet. It may be said entire or in parts, even the single invocations, said whilst working, etc.

The indulgence is on each separate invocation.

Our Mothers as well as the dear favored Sister, suffered much on this account. But Our Lord encouraged them:

"My daughter, God's graces are not given without some difficulty for the accomplishment of My Will. The prophets of the Ancient Law were obliged to say and repeat what God willed, so, you also, My daughter, will have the Cross.

"My Wounds belong to you . . . the more opposition and obstacles you meet, the more abundant will be My grace."

God the Father, holding a key in His Hand, seemed to threaten with an appearance of severity:

"If you fail to do what I wish, I will close the Sources, and I will give Them to others."

The patient and humble firmness of our Mothers, Thérèse-Eugénie and Marie-Alexis, triumphed little by little over all obstacles. Our Lord manifestly sustained them.

A Sister who was remarkable in the Community for her superior intelligence and solid judgment was most strenuously opposed to the new devotion. One day the humble Sister approached her charged with a message on the part of the Master: the Sister heard revealed to her a matter that was an absolute secret between her and Him in the intimacy of her soul, and which she had never confided to any one, consequently, Sister Martha could not know it from ordinary knowledge. Surprised and transformed, the Sister yielded loyally, and wished to repair her past opposition by making little pictures of the Holy Wounds in order to propagate the devotion.

Before such progress the rage of the demon could not be restrained. He vented it above all on our Sister, whom he derided as losing her time in useless prayers.

But the assurance of Jesus maintained her confidence in driving away the temptation:

"My daughter, I see all, I count all. Tell your Mother that I keep count of each aspiration that she makes. She must do all that she can to maintain the Chaplet of Mercy."

"I am happy to see you honor My Holy Wounds; I can now pour out more abundantly the fruits of My Redemption."

"Your Monasteries attract the graces of God upon the Dioceses where they are found. When you offer My Holy Wounds to My Father, I behold you extending your hands to heaven in order to receive graces. Truly this prayer is not from the earth but from Heaven, it can obtain everything. You must tell the Mother to recall this, to write it for the future, in order that you may have recourse to it by preference."

And again: *"You to whom I have taught this prayer that disarms Me, are very happy: 'My Jesus, pardon and mercy through the merits of Thy Holy Wounds.' The graces that you receive by these invocations are penetrating. They come from heaven, they must return to heaven."*

The political situation was becoming daily more critical, relates our Mother; in October, 1873, we made a novena to the Holy Wounds of Jesus. Immediately Our Lord testified His joy to the Confidante of His Heart, then He addressed her in these comforting words:

"I love the Community so greatly that no evil will ever happen to it. Let your Mother pay no attention to the news of the time, for very often reports from outside are false. My word alone is true, I tell you that you have nothing to fear."

Finally, ratifying anew the gift of His Holy Wounds to the Community:

"Behold your treasure", repeated Jesus . . . *The Treasure of the Holy Wounds encloses crowns which you should take and give to others. One day these souls for whom you shall have obtained a holy death by your prayers, will turn towards you to thank you. All men shall appear before Me on the judgment day, and I shall then point out My privileged Spouses, who shall have purified the world by My Holy Wounds. A day will come on which you shall see great things!"*

The recommendations of Our Lord have not been in vain. The daily recourse to this heavenly prayer is maintained in the Community.

And when there arose great difficulties, grave needs, and threatening dangers, the invocations were made more numerous and more urgent. We had recourse to the "Six thousand six hundred." This was to conform to a light that Sister Mary Martha believed she had received from her Master:

"You must recite the Rosary in entirety, because then, all reunited, you honor the 6666 strokes of My Scourging." (1)

(1) Opinions vary in regard to the number of blows that Jesus received in His scourging.

Some have tried to enumerate the stripes and blows received by Our Lord. Blessed Burgutta says that the stripes numbered 5,475.

And after an experience of fifty years the Community can declare that it has always had to congratulate itself on account of its confidence. It is not that trials have been spared nor that the visits of death have been unfrequent —far from this. But trials were sweetened by much consolation, and deaths are so sweet in the shadow of the Holy Wounds!

Our own Blessed Gertrude suggests about the same number, 5,466, and Saint Bonaventure gives 5,676. Lewis of Granada is of the opinion that the number is about 5,500, Alphonsus Horospuus, that it is 15,370. John of Aquila, quoting the revelation to Saint Bernard, states that Christ was struck 6,666 times at the pillar.

The **theatrum** of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Notwithstanding the foundation that the opinions above indicated may have, touching the numerical sense of the strokes of the scourging, nothing prevents the acceptation of these numbers 5,500, 6,000, 6,666, and others of the same kind, in the sense of "innumerable". Thus we say: "I thank you a thousand times", or "infinitely", meaning: my thanks cannot be counted.

(Note: R. P. Fr. Bouchage.)

OTHER PREFERRED DEVOTIONS

THE COMMUNITY

THE SCHOOL

CHAPTER XI

SISTER MARY MARTHA AND THE INFANT JESUS

O great God! who has made Thee so little?—"Love!"
And what dost Thou ask in exchange?—"Love!"
(St. Bernard.)

IT would be difficult to express the ardent and artless love of Sister Mary Martha for *her dear Little Jesus,* or to reproduce as one would wish, the delightful course of their intimacy.

The Infant Jesus made Himself visible to her every morning at Holy Communion; but this was not sufficient for their mutual attachment . . . Jesus took pleasure in the habitual company of this soul in which, as in a limpid crystal, could be reflected the purity and simplicity of His divine Infancy. Under the rustic exterior of our dear Sister, there was, in effect, something so pure, so candid, so innocent!

"Her confidence is simple and so childlike", writes the Superior of Sister Mary Martha. "She goes to Our Lord as a little child to the best of Fathers."

It is charming and most interesting to discover this new characteristic trait of her disposition.

Only a very incomplete knowledge of the soul of our Sister will be obtained if we consider only that aspect of her life which has been brought into relief up to this point. A little austere in her "mission" of prayer and reparation, the Elect of Jesus Crucified is, moreover, a touching example of *exquisite intimacy with God, the most Holy Virgin, and the Saints* . . . and very specially with the *Infant Jesus.*

Sister Mary Martha shares in the humiliated, suffering, penitent, redeeming life of Jesus Crucified. But also in the society of the Infant Jesus, she leads a childlike, simple, joyous, and expansive life.

These conditions, commenced when she was quite young, assumed in the cloister a ravishing familiarity, for material things as well as for those of the soul.

How many times when exhausted or pressed for time did she not implore the help of *her little Jesus!*

One day when she was suffering and still fasting until one o'clock in the afternoon, Sister Mary Martha deliberated with herself as to whether she should look for help with her work, which was much delayed:

"Good Master, Thou seest how I am; what should I do?" . . .

Immediately a radiant child of six or seven years appears to her:

"If you wish, I will be your Aid!"

"Oh yes, good Master, I count on Thee!"

"I am the friend of peace," answered the Infant God, *and an enemy of trouble. I wish you to remain near Me."*

With Jesus, and under His divine eye all is soon finished: the tables cleared, dishes washed. Chapel and Refectory

swept, in preparation for the pupils' lunch . . . At two o'clock our Sister was free to make her spiritual reading. Jesus remained near His Spouse until three o'clock, when He disappeared leaving her in a heavenly joy. At five o'clock, the happy Sister on entering the choir for prayer, again found her *dear little Jesus.*

Sometimes with an inconceivable kindness the Infant Jesus offered His services Himself.

"Command Me, and I will do whatever you wish."

"Well! My dear Master, aid me to do my Refectory . . . and Sister Mary Martha saw the Divine Infant before her, doing the cleaning and preparing the table . . .

"I wish you to continue to do everything for Me," He said to her. *"Do not ask any one to help you in your charge, then I will be your Aid Myself."* And He Who has the Angels for servants, went to the sink! . . .

Time passed then with the rapidity of lightning, whilst the heart of the greatly favored Domestic Sister was inflamed with love for her "Divine little Aid, so beautiful, so amiable" . . . This corner of the house becomes a heaven, the Angels are there, also visible, in order to pay court to their Master, and our Sister finds that the dishes are finished only too soon.

"Always very alert, it occurred to her that if some Sister should pass she would see the Infant Jesus washing the plates, and her, rinsing them . . . so she closed the door well, in order that no one should suspect what was going on in this blessed place." (Manuscript.)

In fact, the Domestic Sisters were very much astonished and could not understand how Sister Mary Martha could accomplish so much work by herself, in such a heavy charge. Now, it is known where she obtained help!

It is also known that very friendly conversations were carried on there. Jesus said:

"Let us play 'little children' both of us . . . two little children together."

"O good little Jesus, how much I love Thee!" she answered . . . and Jesus seemed happy.

"When you speak to Me in this manner, even when you do not see Me, I shall always be happier because I am ever listening to you."

In withdrawing, He tenderly asked her:

"My Spouse, are you not pleased with Me? Do I not help you well?"

Not less gracious were the scenes that were presented in the enclosure of the Monastery. The gathering of the fruit was a delightful time for our Sister. She conversed continually and aloud with the Beloved of her soul.

Before going to the garden she said with simplicity:

"My little Jesus, come and work with me, since I cannot remain in the choir with you."

Sometimes in the early morning "her dear little Jesus" notified her himself:

"It is time, hurry!"

She made haste, carrying to the garden two immense baskets. Jesus had accompanied her . . . She saw Him

gathering the fruit with her! With both of them the work was soon done and the baskets filled with beautiful plums! . . . But how heavy they are! Sister Mary Martha was not able to lift them:

"Good Master, I cannot carry these great baskets all alone, . . . but if You will help me, all will go well."

Her divine little Aid did not leave her in embarrassment, and both returned to the Monastery sharing the burden.

If we pass to the things of the soul, there was the same familiarity. Certain of the Annual Retreats were specially illumined by the company of the Infant Jesus.

"In order to make your examen," the heavenly Director said to her in 1878, *you must consider what was not conformable to Me in your conduct."*

And the adorable Child, unveiling and showing His Heart explained to His Spouse *how there were enclosed "in this little Heart the knowledge that He had when older of His Wounds and His Passion . . . and all the graces that He had conferred upon her up to this time."*

The happy soul saw with ecstasy the Heart of the sweet Emmanuel, with *"His little finger on the little Heart of Jesus." "In order to believe all these things,"* added the good Master, *"a childlike simplicity is needed, believing all that is said without the reasoning of human wisdom. A child trusts in his father and mother, because he knows that they love him well, and pardon everything! . . . I ask you not to lose the time of the Retreat in looking for faults, but to employ it in considering Me."*

And, on the last day of the Retreat of 1885, when the presence of Jesus was felt by her to be more tender than ever:

"If you do not leave Me," assures the Divine Infant, *"I shall never leave you."*

It was to the Holy Communion above all that Sister Mary Martha was to go as a little child to her father's table.

"If you are hungry," said Our Lord to His servant, *"come for food; but for this you must be a little child . . . The child's soul is innocent, simple, and confiding, a soul without malice. When the soul is in this state of infancy, it can come to Me directly: there is no obstacle."*

"The heart of this happy daughter, cannot but think of her Jesus," writes the Superior.

The sight of the Divine Child, working with her and following her step by step, hardly ever leaves her. She said with simplicity:

"Mother, I am as near to Him as I am to you." (Manuscript.)

Feast days were generally marked for our Sister by some special favors on the part of the Infant Jesus:

"Here I am," He said, *"it is a feast day. I have come to rejoice My Spouse. Learn from this little Child that you must become like Him—a very little child. This is the grace that I give you . . . acknowledge My gifts . . . also consider your misery and never lose sight of it."*

"How could you think that I should not consider my misery, good little Jesus?" exclaimed the happy favored one. *"But be Thou my light, for I cannot keep my promise without Thee."*

Daughter of Saint Francis Assisi and of Saint Francis de Sales, Sister Mary Martha enjoyed, perhaps more than any one else, the feast of Christmas so dear to her two Patriarchs.

The Infant Jesus on this day manifested Himself to her with charms ever new, and with such a marvelous beauty that time passed without her consciousness of it. She gave herself without restraint to the joys of this contemplation, and morning found her in the Choir, kneeling in the same position as on the eve, having neither heard nor understood anything except the tenderness of the Divine newly born Infant.

One year she had a vision of the whole Angelic Court and the Saints surrounding the Crib:

"My daughter, in order to enjoy Me, you must become like those whom you see around Me, that is, let the earth be no more anything to you, but let your heart and thoughts be always with Me."

On another Christmas night it was the Blessed Virgin who brought Jesus to the child of His predilections:

"My daughter, I give Him to you, but you must be a little child like Him . . . Little children like to be with little children."

And the adorable Emmanuel, contemplating the happiness of our Sister, murmured these ineffable words:

"Though I should have but one heart like yours in order to take My delights therein, although all others should be ungrateful, I would not regret having come upon earth."

CHAPTER XII

SISTER MARY MARTHA AND THE BLESSED VIRGIN, SAINT JOSEPH AND THE HOLY FAMILY

"All for Mary—all through Mary to Christ, and through Christ to God."
(Blessed Grignon de Montfort.)

WITH JESUS—MARY

ONE day a Sister asked Sister Mary Martha:
"Do you love the Blessed Virgin very much?"

"Oh, this good Mother, surely I love her!" she answered, whilst at the mention of this blessed Name her countenance lighted up, transformed by the radiance of a pure joy.

Her devotion to Mary was very deep and filial, it was really a simple return, for Mary testified a most maternal tenderness towards her child.

In reviewing the manuscripts relating the favors granted to our Sister, it is extremely touching to find on every page, near the figure of Jesus, the ravishing image of the Immaculate Virgin.

Our amiable Queen appeared to her one day in her glory. She leaned towards the earth to look at her daughters and seemed entirely occupied with us and entirely oblivious of

the splendor that surrounded her. This good Mother extended her hand to our little Sister as if to draw her towards her. (May 3, 1871.)

During Holy Mass on the feast of the Visitation, July 2, 1878, the Queen of Heaven presented herself anew to the contemplation of her servant. Transported with joy Sister Mary Martha exclaimed in her heart:

"Eternal Father, I offer Thee the merits of the Holy Sacrifice for the greater glory of my good Mother!"

Mary, smiling, and "very happy", this is the exact expression of this innocent soul, said to her:

"My daughter, you are not deceiving yourself; I am a still 'better Mama' than your Mother, who, however, loves you very much."

Let us remark in passing, that Mary always desired to inspire her child with this "amiable goodness", often recommending it to her:

"Your heart must always be in a disposition of humility and goodness. My daughter, you are not permitted to think of yourself, but you should always think of your neighbor."

At another time when Sister Mary Martha was entertaining herself *interiorly* with her divine Mother, she appeared to her in order to testify her pleasure:

"When a child speaks to his Mother present, it pleases her, but when the Mother knows that in her absence the child speaks constantly of her, it makes her still happier. Even when you seem to be very distant from me, you are, however,

very near. Recall that I am your Mother; come to me with great confidence and you will be heard."

Thus did the Servant of God act. With her there was never hesitation nor fear in her recourse to Mary: "When we confided some particular intention to her," relates the Superior, "and she saw Our Lord insensible to her prayer, she addressed the Eternal Father, but still more frequently, with an extreme confidence, our Immaculate Mother, who would obtain for her the answer to her prayers."

The object of her request was not always of a supernatural order nor of extreme importance . . . sometimes it was simply for fine weather. (1) On a certain occasion Our Lord having been solicited in vain, our Sister turning towards the heavenly Mediatrix:

"Good Mother, you see I can obtain nothing; please ask it for us."

"That very day", notes the Manuscript, "towards noon, we had very fine weather."

Among the pious practices dear to the heart of our fervent Sister, we must mention the Rosary. She prized this loved prayer above all others; she knew it to be sovereignly efficacious.

September 3, 1870, whilst she was answering the Rosary that our Sisters in retreat are accustomed to recite, when walking together after dinner, Mary manifested to Sister Mary Martha her predilection for those who subjected themselves to this practice:

(1) Rain and fine weather played a great role in the life of Sister Mary Martha, who having charge of the fruit was interested in its preservation.

"Those who say the Rosary with fervor will merit to be in my company, and all who make an effort to attend it, give me pleasure."

On one occasion when the entire Community was engaged in this pious exercise, she was shown the graces and numerous benedictions that the Savior was pouring upon our families as a result of the prayers in honor of His Mother.

"I am the Mother of all souls, but I wish to be prayed to," declared the most holy Virgin in another circumstance. *"You must give me fifteen flowers a day."*

The maternal role of Mary is above all to attract and unite souls to Jesus. With what care did she not fulfil this in regard to our Sister!

"My daughter, in order to pass my month well," she said to her on the first day of May, *"you must constantly retire into your heart with Jesus. I have practiced this exercise all my life, you must imitate me."*

On her feast days this blessed Mother loved to make her cherished daughter enjoy the sensible presence of the Infant God.

A feast of the Visitation she said to Sister Mary Martha:

"My daughter, I give you my little Jesus. He will be well cared for in your innocent heart that knows no evil."

On the Assumption she said to her at Holy Communion:

"The little Infant is for you, He is for childlike souls."

Another day placing the Divine Emmanuel in the arms of Sister Mary Martha:

"You must carry Him," she said to her graciously, *"and ask Him to rain his graces upon the world."*

The happy child, with an infinite joy, tenderly caressed her dear little Jesus, whom she pressed to her heart during a quarter of an hour.

"To live with Jesus in a childlike joy," the holy Virgin had explained to her, *"is to care for Him in His Infancy, it is to participate in the joy that my heart experienced when I had the happiness of attending to Him in the cradle."*

Always the way of spiritual infancy! It was in this way that the divine Mistress guided our Sister, and to this end she recommends *obedience* to her:

"I do not wish you to perform any act, no matter how good it may appear, when not in obedience."

She also recommends purity of intention to her:

"Happy are the souls that go straight to God with purity of intention, who aspire to God alone, who do everything for God! They lead on earth the life of the Angels in Heaven!"

She maintained her in *confidence* and *abandonment*. Sister Mary Martha was under the pressure of a great interior pain, her Mother in Heaven consoles, encourages and instructs her.

"My child, fear nothing, I will be your security."

"My good Mother, I am troubled at the condition in which I am."

"My daughter, you have nothing to be disturbed about in regard to perfection, you have but to execute what my Son desires of you without considering yourself. Leave to Him the care of your perfection, and you will have everything that is necessary.

"Do not act as slaves, they are always in fear. As for you, fear nothing, but love much. You are children that their Father loves much."

More frequently still, on the lips of the Mother of God, returns the *lesson of humility.*

"My daughter, put yourself below every one, and thank the good God for having placed you in the midst of such holy Religious."

The august Virgin took, as it were, the appearance of her little servant, placing herself on a level with her in order to humiliate herself:

"My daughter, we shall humble ourselves together for poor sinners. Become very little and you will be my true daughter. I do nothing but admire the abasement of my Son towards such a miserable creature, and I continually ask humility for you."

Sister Mary Martha supplicated her Divine Mother to obtain for her this inestimable virtue of her heart:

"My daughter," replied the most holy Virgin, *"you wish that I should give you the greatest grace that I can grant, the most agreeable to my Son and to the whole heavenly Court: Humility! . . . I will give it to you provided you ask me for it every time that you may have occasion to exalt yourself."*

"My good Mother," insisted the innocent child, *"I want it forever."*

"There is more love and more humility in asking it often . . . you must increase in humility until death: by this means you will rejoice my maternal heart."

And Mary added this word—a profound and inexhaustible subject of meditaton: *"You will become like me,* **'the Mother of Jesus,'** *by humility."*

But the most holy Virgin does not wish it to be forgotten that Jesus died *crucified,* and that He died *for souls.* She confided to Sister Mary Martha the great desire of her own heart:

"I hunger for souls! If you only knew how closely I am united with Jesus in desiring their salvation!"

The salvation of souls is obtained only by the merits of the Passion of Christ. It is a reminder from His Mother of the "Mission" confided to our Sister:

"Pray much for sinners, that they may receive the fruits of the Redemption. My motherly heart will be relieved and consoled."

"It is in your hearts that Jesus finds reparation by the offering of the Holy Wounds.

"If you wish to give me pleasure you must remain at the foot of the Cross of My Son, and with humility offer His Merits to the Eternal Father in order to satisfy for the sins of men."

The supreme gift of the Virgin Mary, as that of Jesus, in awaiting heaven, is—after the Crib and the Cross—the Holy Eucharist:

"My daughter, I gave Him to you on the beautiful day of your First Communion, and ever since in all of your Communions you see this dear little Infant . . . but on the day of your death I shall give Him to you for Eternity."

Feeling her heart very empty and very poor, Sister Mary Martha before approaching the Holy Table, turned willingly towards her good Mother, offering to Our Lord the dispositions of this virginal heart in order to supply for her own. With a most touching condescension:

"I become poor in coming to you, my daughter," Mary said to her one day; *"together we shall thus go poor to receive my Son, and, having nothing, we shall have all."*

Another time, May 27, 1880, the holy Virgin accompanied her to the Choir for the hour of adoration:

"My daughter," she said, *"you must come without your body."* Hardly on her knees before the Most Blessed Sacrament, Sister Mary Martha became motionless, her eyes closed, her hands joined, with the expression of a soul totally absorbed in God.

During these delightful moments, her heavenly Teacher taught her to do nothing but offer the merits of the Savior, united to those of His Mother, and to repeat constantly to Our Lord for herself and for the entire world:

"My Jesus, pardon, mercy!"

Sister Mary Martha appeared to us a child most loving, and most beloved by the Mother of Heaven. Doubtless, it was on her particular account that Mary uttered these words:

"Childlike souls, who go directly and simply, are my true daughters."

Doubtless moreover, our Sister answered to the ideal traced, with that good will which charms the heart of a mother, for one day—a remarkable fact and one well cal-

culated eminently to purify a soul!—the Immaculate Mother inclining towards her humble child imprinted a maternal kiss upon her, saying:

"Thus do I love you, when you love my Son."

WITH JESUS AND MARY, SAINT JOSEPH

Sister Mary Martha's heart never separated what God has so strongly and sweetly united. She loved "good Saint Joseph", and to him she had recourse with a filial confidence, following the invitation of the Savior Himself:

"You must call Saint Joseph your Father, for I have given him the title and the goodness of a Father."

And the august Guardian of the Infant God disdained not to condescend to relations of sweet intimacy, in which our Sister received useful teachings for her spiritual life.

Lessons of perfect charity:

"My child, Jesus wishes to possess your heart without division. According as you will be faithful in giving Him all your love, Jesus will give you a pure love for creatures, which will come from Him."

Lessons of recollection and of union with God:

"I love much more the prayer of the heart, interior union with Jesus, than only the prayer of the lips."

Promises of help in daily needs:

"I keep count of all the prayers that are offered to me."

He gave her this assurance for the hour of death:

"If the soul that has prayed to me has still some debts to pay to the Sovereign Judge, I will ask grace for her."

And he recommended to her for every day of her life the prayer, which is so apostolic:

"Glorious Saint Joseph, protect us, protect the Holy Church!"

It was *in* the Holy Family and *with* the Holy Family that Sister Mary Martha took special pleasure in venerating and invoking "good Saint Joseph." *Jesus, Mary, Joseph:* how greatly she loved to bring these three names together, and how greatly she loved to contemplate Mary and Joseph with Jesus!

At the end of a long ecstasy she said to her Superior:

"Mother, I have come from Heaven! I cannot tell what I have seen, I can say only one thing: I prostrated at the feet of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph; I said to Saint Joseph: 'Good Father, I thank you for having taken care of my Mother Mary when you were on this earth . . . Now, I ask you to keep for me my earthly Mother, that she may not die before me . . . Saint Joseph did not answer me." (1)

One of her preferred invocations was: *"Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, I give you my heart, my soul, and my life."* She recited it with so much fervor that she merited this encouragement from the august Spouse of our Lady:

"When you make this invocation, we take your hearts and we give them to Jesus."

"This prayer gives me great glory and great joy," added Saint Joseph.

It renews all the happiness that was mine in being the adopted Father of Jesus and the Head of the Holy Family."

(1) Our very honored Mother Thérése-Eugénie Revel died a long time before Sister Mary Martha.

CHAPTER XIII

SISTER MARY MARTHA AND THE MOST HOLY TRINITY

Holy! Holy!! Holy!
Lord God of Hosts!

OUR dear Sister had, in a very special degree, an attraction to this ineffable Mystery. She had very soon habituated herself to do nothing without invoking the Holy Trinity. Impelled by Jesus she took the custom of ending each of her works by three signs of the Cross, in order to glorify the Holy Trinity and compensate for the omissions caused by routine. It was to the Divine Persons that Our Lord required her to make the promise of making known completely to her Superior and Mistress of Novices, in spite of her repugnance, all the graces, lights, and heavenly gifts with which she might be favored. (Retreat of 1867.)

Sister Mary Martha loved to express her devotion to the great mystery of our faith, by the sign of our redemption:

"When you make the sign of the Cross" the voice from On High taught her, *"make it with attention and gravity, because at this moment the Most Holy Trinity communicates Itself to you."*

We have already seen the August Trinity manifest Itself to the happy young Sister. We recall the three great

days, September 26, 27, 28, 1867, when amidst the splendors of the Holy Trinity, God unveiled her "Mission" to her, tracing a line of conduct for her whole life.

This was the first manifestation; there are others. On the eve of All Saints Our Lord rejoiced His Beloved with a sight of the Adorable Trinity, "whose feast the Blessed were celebrating before their own, in contemplating the grandeur and majesty of the three Divine Persons."

Addressing the child of earth they said to her:

"This feast is full, it can neither be increased nor diminished . . . It is endless . . . As for you, you should prepare for the feast of tomorrow in delivering souls from Purgatory and in paying what they still owe, with the merits of Jesus Christ. This is a great work, but it is full of joy." (Manuscript)

Another night as Sister Mary Martha, crowned with thorns, was extended on the floor of her cell, the three Divine Persons appeared to her, and lights were given her on these words of Genesis: "Let us make man to our own image and likeness."

Finally "one day on which Our Lord had wished to prepare, Himself, the confession of His Servant who was in anguish regarding it, our child received anew the visit of the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity. It was as rapid as lightning. The Father said to her:

"I bless you and receive you for My child."

The Son said to her:

"I give you all the fruit of My Redemption and, moreover, I give Myself to you. My Redemption is for souls that I confide to you, and as for Me, I am for you! . . . I am your own."

And the Holy Ghost said to her in His turn:

"I come to sanctify you and to resanctify you."

At that moment she felt in the depths of her soul such an extreme sorrow for her sins that tears flowed in abundance. (Manuscript.)

GOD THE FATHER

Sister Mary Martha professed towards God the Father a veritable worship of tenderness, an abandonment, a child-like confidence. She said that she felt "such paternity and goodness in this God Creator, such a great compassion for the misery of human creatures, His children!"

She was heard to express regret that there was no special solemn feast in His honor, and seeing in every Sunday the day consecrated to His divine repose, she sighed at beholding it so little sanctified in the world.

She loved to address God the Father frequently, Jesus having first invited her to do so, teaching her to say in His divine manner: *"Our Father Who art in Heaven,"* recommending her to make genuflections to honor His Father.

Every day at the Pater of the Grace at table, her soul soared to the feet of the Sovereign Creator:

"Good Father, I thank Thee for all Thy benefits. I thank Thee for having placed me with such holy Religious

and I ask Thee to make them all attain the perfection of our vocation."

"The childlike candor of this dear soul with her good Master and the Eternal Father is inconceivable," writes the Annalist, "and by this means she is instructed, consoled, and directed."

"You are like the spoiled and beloved child of the Father," Jesus said to her, and she knew it well!

God the Father often introduced her into the beatific regions that she might assist at feasts that ravished her. Then her soul was consumed with ardent aspirations towards the sacred Courts. God the Father taught her to live with Jesus.

One morning Sister Mary Martha was in the Choir before the arrival of the Community for prayer. Suddenly, her soul saw Heaven open, and the Almighty, inclined towards her, said with paternal sweetness:

"My child, I give you My Son to aid you all day long."

He taught her to live with the Infant Jesus, thus encouraging her in this devotion, so full for her of charm and fruit.

He recommended to her one day to offer Him Our Lord as a little child:

"Everything is enclosed in the offering of this little Child. You must often make Me the present of this offering."

He also encourages her in her "Mission" of reparation in union with **Jesus Crucified:**

"My daughter, you must humble yourself much in working and in offering the Holy Wounds of My Son to make up what is wanting to My Justice."

"My good Father, if I had to choose I would well wish to go to you." . . .

"What would you do in Heaven? You would offer Me the Wounds of My Divine Son; The Saints do nothing else . . . Your hearts must always make the offering inflamed with love."

He teaches her never to forget Mary. On the vigil of the Nativity (September 8, 1885) awakening before midnight in order to salute the birth of the Immaculate Virgin, our dear little Sister heard the voice of the Eternal Father:

"My daughter," He said, *"thank Me for having given you such a good Mother."*

He Himself surrounds her with His paternal tenderness: One night—it was August 1, 1868—after having made her contemplate for a long time the Savior on the Cross, and feel the sufferings and the anguish of the Divine Crucified, God the Father leaned towards His humble child and was so good and so tender, that during all the remainder of the night she enjoyed this divine Presence, with the impression that "only the little can receive such great favors." And the heavenly Father murmured:

"My child, could you find a like happiness elsewhere? It is a compensation for your sufferings. You will always return to Me in making yourself little in your heart."

THE HOLY GHOST

The Holy Ghost seems not to have held a lesser place in the life of Sister Mary Martha, His action is united for her with the action of Jesus.

"On a feast of Pentecost, Our Lord showed Himself visibly to His Spouse, and in order to strengthen her in her way, He said to her:

"My daughter, the lights that you receive come from Me!" And the Spirit of Jesus penetrated her.

Another feast of Pentecost Our Lord said to her:

"My daughter, today My Church has received the greatest mark of My Love . . . I have given it My Spirit of Light."

And showing her the Spirit pouring graces and lights upon the world, He added:

"In order to receive the plentitude of the Holy Spirit, you must keep your hearts in a state of annihilation and love, like a melting candle that sinks down in consuming."

However, it would not be difficult to find in the existence of our Sister distinct "Missions" of the Spirit of Love.

It is to be remembered, that she received from God the Father, this Spirit of Love under the form of a ray of fire, we also recall the gracious visit of the same Spirit, causing her soul to melt in a loving contrition.

Another manifestation not less beautiful: Kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament, Sister Mary Martha was beginning a night of adoration when a magnificent Dove, all

sparkling with light, came and settled upon her head, covering her entirely with its wings. At the same time an ineffable sweetness filled her soul, inundating her with joy. This was a true visit of the Holy Spirit.

"This Dove was of incomparable beauty," said our child, *"more beautiful than anything else in Heaven."*

Whatever may be thought of these manifestations, one thing is evident: it is the influence exercised upon her soul by Jesus, by the Spirit of Jesus having come to *sanctify* and *resanctify* her.

CHAPTER XIV

SISTER MARY MARTHA AND THE MOST HOLY EUCHARIST

"There are two results of love: it comes, it takes hold, it enters into possession, it mounts guard in the one whom it loves in order to enrich him, to procure his happiness . . .

It comes, it remains, it reposes in the one whom it loves in order to enjoy the gifts it has bestowed upon him and the happiness of each is fused into one."

(St. Thomas of Aquin.)

OUR Lord established the Sacrament of Love in order to remain with us and continue in us the mystery of His Incarnation. In this extension of the Incarnation, Sister Mary Martha largely participated. The Eucharist was her daily nourishment from Holy Thursday, 1867, until her death, that is—for nearly forty years.

During a period of several years, the heavenly Bread was for the Servant of God her only bodily food, as well as that of her soul, and it is remembered that the very honored Mother Thérèse-Eugénie then wrote:

"The Holy Communion, which is her sole nourishment, gives her such physical strength that she does the most laborious work with the greatest facility."

In appointing her a place before the Tabernacle as at the foot of the Cross, Our Lord had made His Spouse clearly understand that she would there find her supreme strength:

"My daughter, if you did not climb Calvary every day, in spite of your suffering, and if you did not come each morning to receive Me, you would not have had the strength to work. The Holy Communion is your life! It is the means that I employ to render you capable of serving the Community.

"Without this grace of daily Communion you would have passed your life in bed. The Holy Communion and suffering, behold your nourishment, behold your two repasts."

This Divine Food was strength for her body, because It was first of all the life and strength of her soul . . . What a beautiful eucharistic soul was that of Sister Mary Martha! In this soul, what a hunger for Jesus in the Holy Eucharist! . . .

It was only in Him that she found her support and consolation. She sighed in expectation from one Communion to the other, and it was realized when she approached the Holy Table, that she was running to the Source of Life. Her countenance then assumed an air of calm and recollected joy, most remarkable for those who could obtain a glimpse of it. Through the transparency of this countenance could be read the ardent love of a heart possessing her Jesus.

"I possess Him, Whom my soul desires and I will not let Him go."

Towards morning, notes the manuscript, Sister Mary Martha used to feel strongly attracted to God, and sometimes at the Communion she heard the voice of Jesus calling her:

"Come quickly, My Spouse! do what the Blessed do in Heaven . . . Come receive Me at the Communion to enjoy Me . . .

Out of herself with joy, the happy child, seeing Jesus within her and feeling herself in Him, said:

"Good Master, I hold Thee, Thou art all Mine."

"Yes," answered the Savior, *"I am all yours!" Take Me with you, I will work with you."*

Inflamed with love by such words, all her days passed in an intimate and sensible union with her Beloved Jesus.

This ardent love rendered the least delay very painful to her, and above all, the least suspension in regard to the Holy Communion.

After the death of Canon Bouvier, the new Confessor of the Community, wished, during a retreat, to make no exception, and imposed upon her, as was the custom then, some days of Eucharistic privation. The humble Privileged One of the Savior submitted without murmuring, but her sorrow was so great that she fell fainting, on leaving the confessional.

The pious lover of the Eucharist, initiated in the sentiments of ineffable tenderness of her Divine Master, was pleased to say:

"The time seems long to Our Lord on the eve of Communions; so much does He desire to enter our hearts."

Let us cite a trait which shows us at what price our Sister sometimes bought the happiness procured for the heart of the Heavenly Spouse.

Sunday, December 31, 1871, after the conventual Mass, Sister Mary Martha, trembling with fever and no longer able to keep up, was obliged to go to bed. She remained three days in an extremely suffering condition. Our Lord came to visit her every morning, but on the fourth day He made her understand that He would not come, but that if she wished to receive Him she should go to Him herself.

"Full of a spirit of faith, our very honored Mother Marie Alexis permitted her daughter to obey the good pleasure of the Master. In spite of a heavy perspiration, Sister Mary Martha begins to dress herself; Her weakness is so great that she falls half fainting. The infirmarian is obliged to lift her up and help her to complete her toilet. With the aid of the Superior she is led to the gallery for the sick, where the poor child sinks upon a chair seemingly in a dying condition.

"She hears Mass; Holy Communion is given to her. Hardly has she received Our Lord, when her strength returns. The thanksgiving over, she returns to her employment, and on this very day performs all the service for the pupils' refectory." (Manuscript.)

It may be said that the whole life of our Sister was only a preparation for Holy Communion and a prolonged

thanksgiving. Humility, purity, detachment from everything created, simple and loving confidence, such were the dispositions in which, by His graces and teachings, the Divine Master maintained His faithful disciple:

"Good Master, what art Thou going to find in my miserable heart?"

"My daughter, I shall find all that I have placed there. I shall also find your faults in order to annihilate them, but for this you must be very much alone with Me in your heart. You must bring to Holy Communion the ardor of the Angels and the humility of My Mother."

"Run to Me as a famished person," said the Savior to her at another time.

Not knowing how to act, our ignorant child interrogated her Master:

"My daughter, it is in abasing yourself profoundly by humility; this is also the only means of making the Holy Communion fruitful."

After the reception of the Holy Eucharist, Sister Mary Martha felt her heart united and bound so closely to the Heart of Jesus, that she was unable to express the strength of this union, and we know how she was absorbed in delight in this adorable Heart.

However, Jesus said to her one day:

"There are some who eat but little of this Bread, and yet, who well know how to profit by it . . . You, who are nourished with it so often, know not how to profit by it!"

"Ah, My Mother," she admitted, sighing, and with sincere humility, *"this is very true! Our Lord is always with me . . . How far I am from knowing how to profit by it! But I have prayed to the Blessed Virgin, our Holy Founders, and the good Angels to be pleased to supply for what is wanting in me . . . and they have promised to do so!"*

This was the word of humility. We know how delighted Our Lord was with His Spouse. He taught her how to make her thanksgiving well, as He had taught her how to make her preparation.

"My daughter, give Me your heart in order to thank Me for the Holy Communion and I shall grant you new graces in return for the satisfaction that you have given Me. I am in your heart, do nothing but look at Me, and as for Me, I will look at you, and all day we shall be together. Behold your thanksgiving!"

One morning in November, Sister Mary Martha, in order to do a work of absolute necessity, was obliged to leave the Choir, but she dared not do so until the end of the time marked by the Rule for the thanksgiving. Her good Master reassured her by these words:

"Go, My child, all I wish is your heart. You may make your thanksgiving in any place. The love of My Heart works constantly with yours."

In all of this our dear Sister hardly thought of analyzing her own feelings. They were obliged to question her in order to lead her to make known her interior sentiments and her attitude towards Jesus.

One day her Spiritual *"Aid"* (1) asked her what method she followed in hearing the Holy Mass:

"Always the same," she replied in language recalling that of the Curé of Ars. *"I follow Our Lord in His Passion . . . I see Him before His judges. Oh, how greatly they ill treated Him! They strike Him, push Him, and throw Him to the ground, dragging Him to the right and to the left by His hair. They pull His beard . . . Oh, how much they make Him suffer! And He, always meek, allows them to do as they wish . . . And before Herod? They put the white garment upon Him and mock Him. They afflict Him in every way. O my Jesus! my Jesus!"*

As Sister Mary Martha continued to speak, her voice became oppressed, like to that of one crushed by sorrow:

"After the scourging, He falls to the earth all torn and covered with Blood . . . And the prison! And the crowning with thorns!"

Thus enumerating the sufferings of her good Master as if they were really present under her eyes, her tears flowed . . . finally, she burst forth into sobs, saying with a broken voice:

"Ah, I cannot speak of that. Ah, my Jesus, my Jesus."

"And do you see this every day?"

"Yes, every day until the Elevation, then it is the Little Jesus, her countenance brightened, *it is the Little Jesus until*

(1) The office of the "Spiritual Aids" is likened by Saint Francis de Sales to that of the "Angels". Each year the Superior appoints two by two all the Sisters of the Community, who converse together once a month to excite each other to the love of God and to correct their faults.

the Communion, when I receive Him. It cannot be explained, but it is Paradise. Oh, how happy one is! When it is this way, both together, hours pass as minutes."

"Hours pass as minutes," nevertheless, temptation finds a way of gliding into this happiness in order to trouble it.

The divine flowers of grace are always mingled with cruel thorns, and with the holiest desires, this soul is tormented with contradictions, opposition, doubts, fears, and perplexities! And certain inconsistencies in the actions of others. Sometimes a pious jealousy was manifested and an astonishment at the favor granted our Sister, a privilege then so rare, that of daily Communion.

"You ought to be holy," they said to her, "you who communicate every day!" . . . (1)

The humble Sister kept silence. Was it not an intense sorrow for her to feel her unworthiness so greatly? Imperfections had not disappeared from her life, and her daily occupations showed the faults of her natural disposition from time to time! . . . The thought of her Communions then became to her a subject of great interior pain, and may it not be imagined that the remarks of others increased this pain!

But Our Lord did not permit this to interfere with her. One day, Sister Mary Martha was tempted to omit Holy

(1) It is remarked in passing that after the decree of His Holiness Pius X, when the Community enjoyed the signal happiness of daily Communion, Sister Mary Martha permitted herself an innocent revenge:

"Well, Sisters, what do you say now? . . . Are you Saints?" . . .

Communion on account of "what they would say". Jesus reproached her for this:

"What, My daughter, do you wish to deprive souls of the great good that they derive from the Holy Communion? . . . Your Communion is to compensate Me for the ungrateful hearts that offend Me and for those who receive Me unworthily—and you would omit it through self-love! . . .

"Another day," relates her Superior, "as her soul was again in a state of great trouble, our dear Sister dared not approach the Holy Table. However, full of faith in the word of Obedience, she overcame her fear. Jesus received her with goodness:

"My daughter, say to your Superior that having sent you to communicate was the greatest act of Charity that she could ever make. Come to Me, My daughter, as you are sick in two ways: First, you suffer from the privation of God and, in order to be cured, you must come to me; secondly, you also suffer from your nothingness and from your misery, forming a great void, which needs to be filled by Me!" . . .

VISITS TO THE BLESSED SACRAMENT AND EUCHARISTIC VIGILS

"If we loved Our Lord," said the holy Curé of Ars, "we should always have present to our mind the gilded Tabernacle, this House of the Good God. When we are on a journey and we perceive a Church tower, this sight should make our heart beat . . . We should never be able to detach our heart and our eyes from it."

Such was truly the love of Sister Mary Martha for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, her heart and her eyes always oriented towards the Tabernacle. When she conversed with her Spiritual Aid in the garden, situated near a projection of the parish Church, she was always careful to sit facing the Sanctuary. All the day long even during her most absorbing occupations, the thought of the Tabernacle was habitually present to her. To this Our Lord urgently invited her.

"I have insituted My Sacrament of Love that I might be the companion of men," said this good Master to her. *"You must constantly commune with Me and speak to Me continually heart to heart. Speak to Me, contemplate Me! This will be your occupation during all eternity! There is found nourishment for the soul, true repose, and the soul is in its center."*

Appearing to her on the Cross and showing her the Blood of His divine Wounds:

"Every one passes, and no one thinks of this Blood! . . . Likewise, in My Sacrament of Love, I am thought of for an instant and then forgotten! . . . My daughter, I am there as well as in Heaven . . . I remain in the Tabernacle for your love, and so few souls come to visit Me!"

Corpus Christi and Holy Thursday, with visits to the Repositories were days of special happiness, saluted with joy by our Sister. With her happiness, however, was mingled poignant suffering to see the Eucharistic Jesus so little understood, so little loved. The complaints of the divine Prisoner touched her deeply:

"In the Repositories, I keep silence as in the Stable of Bethlehem. A crowd of persons will come to visit Me, some through pure curiosity, others through vanity: these souls offend Me. It is for you to make amends to Me by your recollection and silence."

And insisting on the duty of reparation, which permits the Divine Heart to pour out the abundance of Its graces:

"When I find a heart that loves Me and makes reparation to Me, I take My delights with this soul. For this reason, My daughter, I wish that your nights and days should be occupied with this holy exercise."

We know how our privileged Sister passed the Eucharistic vigils. The hour of repose having come for the others, a second life began for her entirely unknown to the Community, a solitary life at the feet of the King of Love. There, Sister Mary Martha contemplated—Sister Mary Martha thanked. Above all she prayed and made reparation.

She prayed particularly for sinners and for the souls in Purgatory, remaining, as it were, *at the gate of Paradise,* to cause souls to enter therein through the merits of the Holy Wounds of the Savior.

Weariness, disgust, anguish, divers temptations, were not absent from these hours of guard, nor were they absent during the remainder of her life. However, she was most frequently the object of the tenderest caresses of the Divine Master, who treated her as another Margaret Mary.

Our Lord whilst keeping hidden His action on this humble Spouse, seems to have wished to bestow upon her the rarest and choicest graces . . . He showed to her also His adorable Heart, a burning furnace . . . He took her heart in order to plunge it and melt it in this fire of love.

"Thus," continues the Superior, "Sister Mary Martha felt in a palpable manner, her heart removed from her and its place remain empty. In her innocence she said:

'Mother, until this morning, I did not know that my heart was on the left side.'"

More than once Jesus renewed this divine rapture.

The holy vigil passed, not, however, in the tribune, but at the choir door, or in a little corner near the church of the Monastery:

"I find you everywhere," then said the Beloved. *"A wall cannot prevent Me from communicating Myself to you."*

And at another time:

"I, Myself, make the breach in the wall which separates us in order to come to you, little child."

This evening He was so marvelously beautiful that she was beside herself with love and the remainder of the night passed with the rapidity of lightning in a celestial happiness.

"Now," the good Master had announced, *"I put in this place all that can please you: later, I shall put there only disgust. You must obtain graces by suffering, as the Blessed obtain them by love."*

Such a perspective was not calculated either to surprise or to terrify our Sister. Had she not chosen for herself to suffer in union with the Master? . . . To all exaltations, she preferred companionship with the immolated Spouse.

"My nights with Jesus Crucified are most delightful," she admitted. *It is then that I feel more encouraged and better fortified to support afterwards the labor and the suffering of the day."*

During these vigils whether of suffering or of joy, Our Lord often condescended to take an active role. He traced the program for the night, suggesting successive intentions, or He made questions to stimulate ardor and to increase love:

"My daughter, what are you doing there?"

"Good Master, I am here to look at Thee and to thank Thee."

"As for Me," replied Jesus, *"I am here to grant you new favors!"*

After having made her pray during several hours and having granted her a final look of love, as tender as a mother with an ailing child, towards morning the Savior commanded her to go to bed:

"Now, it is over, you may go to rest." (1868)

This happened rarely, for in spite of labor and sufferings the God of the Tabernacle ordinarily wished her to be the companion of His solitude.

One evening Sister Mary Martha was sick, weak, and worn out. Our very honored Mother directed her to ask

Our Lord for sufficient health to do the work of her charge.

Jesus answered: *"If you wish to pass the night at My feet, strength will be given to you."*

Authorized by her Superior and notwithstanding the shuddering of her exhausted nature, our Sister acquiesced in the Divine Will . . . The next day her strength was restored, with good health.

The Sovereign Master caused His little Victim to appreciate the grace of His requirements:

"I have two lamps, which burn here before Me," He said to her one evening; *"but you are the one that I regard with the greater pleasure.*

"See, My daughter, what an honor I bestow upon you in keeping you at My Feet. You are there in order to conquer My Heart and to keep Me company for the whole Community.

"You are very happy, for I give you much time to love Me. I give you the day and the night; but I shall ask you for an account of this time . . . "

Other precious encouragements came to revive the fervor of Sister Mary Martha. She heard the voice of God the Father, sweet and caressing:

"I associate you with My Angels to adore My Son and to keep company with Him."

And Saint Francis de Sales added:

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"It is a great honor for me to have one of my daughters associated with the Angels to adore Jesus and practice charity in praying for men . . ."

There was established an admirable emulation between the Angels and our Sister.

"We have only our Spirits and you have your bodies," said the blessed troup, *"your bodies that glorify our God by each of your actions . . . your bodies that should be as shining lamps, burning and consuming themselves in all places and always in the service and for the love of our good Master."*

It was above all before the Blessed Sacrament that the dear adorer made of her body, as of her soul, a holocaust of love, kneeling motionless in contemplation of Him Whom she loved uniquely.

And the influences of the Holy Eucharist were prolonged for Sister Mary Martha even after she had left the choir. How could she forget this word of Jesus:

"You should carry the Tabernacle everywhere!"

CHAPTER XV

SISTER MARY MARTHA AND HER COMMUNITY

WE know not how to crown this first part of our work better, than by following Sister Mary Martha in her life in the Community and in the Boarding School.

As we already know her moral temperament, her "Mission" of expiation, her ravishing familiarity with Heaven, such we find her here, in her every day life.

> "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."
> (Ps. CXXXII-I.)

The "Community" is, in the immense family of the Institute, a small family greatly loved. It is into it that each Religious has been received, adopted, and formed; there she has advanced in the school of the Holy Founders, in the knowledge and love of Jesus, the Spouse; there she is bound to a venerated Mother and chosen Sisters, by very close bonds of supernatural Charity, which survive death. The love of the Community is clothed with a shade of particular tenderness, mingled with gratitude and veneration. All this found place in the affection, the "worship" of Sister Mary Martha for her Community of Chambéry.

She owed this, in great part, to the strong lessons of her Mistress, our very honored Mother Marie-Alexis Blanc. In her instructions in the Novitiate this Mother never ceased speaking of the affection, the respect, and the gratitude due to the Community "that had the Charity to receive us". She vigorously corrected every failing or negligence on this point:

"Before all and everywhere," she taught, "the Community must be considered. In our office let us not regard ourselves nor our conveniences, but the well-being and the interest of the Community. Do not seek to avoid trouble, when there is question of the Community. Consideration, politeness, deference, and not an easy-going nor careless manner in Community assemblies. The Community is coming, let everything be in perfect condition! The Community! these words should keep you in order!"

Such expressions were ineffaceably engraved in the hearts of the Novices. No one remained more deeply penetrated by them than our fervent Sister.

In her Community, the most ordinary things as the most important: material interests, places of assembly, traditions, spiritual goods, Sisters and Superiors—all were held sacred to her.

How greatly Sister Mary Martha loved her Community! Nothing that touched it was indifferent to her. It may be imagined how much she suffered in finding herself ordinarily deprived of the family reunions, which are so sweet in the religious life. So, when some great feast day

gave her leisure, above all when the school vacations came to suspend her accustomed work, with what joy she came among us and offered her services to her companions of the White Veil.

It was a happiness for her to visit the sick; in a few words but with much delicacy, she expressed her sentiments of sisterly affection and compassionate interest. When a sick Sister was at the point of death, she prayed and suffered for her intention with an incomparable zeal and devotedness, although this was all unknown.

She lived with the Community of the "Beyond". We shall see later what charitable relations she entertained with our regretted deceased.

And what shall be said of her love for her Mothers!

"I would do anything for our Mother," assured Sister Mary Martha. *"I would let myself be killed for her!"*

She could not know that they were in trouble without consoling them:

"Good Mother," she sometimes said, *"I am pained that your heart is distressed."*

She belonged to her Community, giving it her strength to exhaustion, her prayers day and night, her incessant sacrifices.

Prayers, sacrifices! This leads us to a trait of her character already known. What our Sister was for the whole world—intercessor and victim, she was first of all for her Community.

"See, My daughter," Our Lord had said to her at different times during 1866 and 1867, *"you are charged with the flock as I am . . . You should acquit yourself daily of the debt towards My justice of each soul of this Community. I render you responsible for the faults of your neighbor. You will be the victim to expiate each day the sins of all."*

Similar advice was given her in the course of these same years, by our former Mother Marie-Pauline Deglapigny, who, July 30, 1873, came again to complete and certify previous messages:

"When a Mother has seen what the justice of God requires of religious souls for so many small faults that easily escape them, she ardently desires to see them acquitted of all debts at the moment of death. I have asked this grace from God for you, in order that none may leave this life without having paid what she owed to divine Justice, that one of this Community should be appointed to supply for what is wanting to It, and it is you who have been chosen. For this reason, when some one is about to die, you will suffer much. You must not forget this."

Sister Mary Martha, therefore, considered herself charged, in the Community and for the Community, with a mission of prayer and expiation.

The Act of offering, which may be remembered, clearly specifies this:

"I promise my Lord Jesus Christ to offer myself every morning to God the Father in union with the Divine Wounds of Jesus Crucified—**for the welfare and the perfection of my Community."**

"I promise Our Lord to offer every ten minutes . . . the divine Wounds of His Sacred Body to the Eternal Father . . . to unite all my actions to His Holy Wounds . . . **for all the needs of my Community, for those of the Novitiate, of the Boarding School, and in expiation for all the faults committed therein."**

God seems to have willingly accepted this "obligation", if we may so judge by the blessings that followed it.

In October, 1868, Sister Mary Martha was appointed to replace the Sister Gardener, who was then making her Annual Retreat:

"My daughter," the divine Master said to her, *"today I will be a Gardener with you."*

Whilst she was working, Jesus suddenly appeared before her as He had shown Himself to His own after the Resurrection. Showing the glorious Wound of His Sacred Heart, and extending His arms to His humble Servant, He said to her with inexpressible tenderness:

"Give Me your heart!"

As she eagerly offered it to Him, she felt that He accepted it, and that He, as it were, absorbed it into His own:

"Now, the Community possesses Me entirely! . . . This union is not only for you; but it is for all the members of the Community."

Jesus led her in spirit throughout the Monastery promising His blessing to every office:

"Tell the Mothers to fear nothing, I love them so much."

On several occasions the good Master repeated these same assurances:

"In your needs you must pray and I will give to you . . . You must live in gratitude and abandonment . . . You must care for nothing except to love and thank Me, then, I will take care of everything."

And on another day:

"Call to mind all the souls of the Community, and ask Me for graces for each one . . . Your Community is not aware of the treasure that it possesses. I tell you this: As long as it will have its treasure, it will have nothing to fear!"

"My daughter, it is I in you, Who am the Treasure."

And it was clearly shown to her that everything was enclosed in the perpetual offering that she made of the Holy Wounds of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

"We had great trouble in drawing these words from her," notes the Manuscript. "In her extreme confusion she was obliged to make violent efforts to articulate them." At the same time the Manuscripts testify to graces received. The writings of our venerated Mothers constantly express their gratitude for the protection that visibly surrounded our Community.

We find in the "Annals of the Monastery" in 1873, a note by our honored Mother Thérèse-Eugénie, then Assistant: It is an outpouring from the heart attesting that "it is in Heaven alone that we shall know how God has loved our religious family". A very veiled allusion, but now perfectly clear to us.

In effect, the same Annalist declares, that in the documents relating to Sister Mary Martha: "It is impossible to enumerate here, all the graces that the Community received by means of this humble daughter who lived unknown in the midst of her Sisters. We feel really a supernatural and visible assistance around this blessed child. All that is in her charge prospers. Everything confided to this simple soul is multiplied in a manner that recalls the oil and the flour of Sarepta and the little inexhaustible barrel of the Gallery." (1)

March 7, 1868, Our Lord sends His little Servant to bless the provision of potatoes, which was nearing an end. He ordered her to kneel and humble herself well, then to make three times the sign of the Cross, *"in the Name and to the glory of the Holy Trinity"*. The humble Domestic Sister knew at this moment that the Holy Trinity had received her prayer. In the evening she said:

"Mother, you must believe that there will be sufficient potatoes to last till the end; Our Lord has said so.

In fact, contrary to all human foresight, the heap, which was very small, never diminished, although they daily drew from it largely, taking all that was necessary for the School and the Community. They lasted until the new ones came, and were found perfectly good and fresh by the Community. Our Sisters in the kitchen knew not

(1) The house called "the Gallery", was the cradle of the Order of the Visitation, in Annecy, where the barrel of wine given in alms to the Religious in June, 1610, lasted miraculously until the vintages of the following year.

("History of St. de Chantal," Bougaud.)

what to think and said: "It is truly extraordinary, there has been a miracle." (Manuscript)

July 19, 1885, Sister Mary Martha had made an abundant and careful gathering of raspberries. On the next day it was the turn for the plums. Whilst she was filling the baskets, she felt interiorly urged to return to the raspberries: *"But, My Jesus,"* she replied, *"it is useless; yesterday, I took all, and there is nothing left."* Feeling the interior movement always stronger our good Sister finally yielded. What was not her surprise to find the branches bending under the weight of large and fine raspberries!

"My daughter, I have put them there to give you the pleasure of offering them to your Sisters" . . .

"Oh, thanks, good Master! There must be as many of them next year."

Our aged Sisters remember with astonishment the prodigious quantity of fruits then supplied by the garden. Our Lord, it seemed, was pleased with increasing them because His chosen one was charged with the gathering.

"You are the little child of the family, who is sent to the work," He said to her, *"and the Master does all that is necessary that you may find them."*

During a Retreat our Sister was obliged by obedience to assist in the harvesting of the grapes for preserves. It was not without much cost to her. Now, as our very honored Mother Thérèse-Eugénie declared, it happened that our dear child filled nine baskets in a place that had already been visited. Astonished at all that she brought, we said to her:

"Where do you get them?"

"Oh, well," she answered, *"I do not know how it happens; but as soon as I cut one bunch, I see another near by."*

A similar subject of astonishment caused a Sister Gardener to remark:

"How is this done? We see nothing on the trees, yet Sister Mary Martha fills baskets of fruit every day!"

One day the lamp oil failed in the house; in desperation the Servant of God was called upon. Although she had not renewed her own provision, she found it so little diminished that she had the satisfaction of supplying the Sisters.

When the wine soured in the casks, or the potatoes were spoiling in the cellar, obedience sent Sister Mary Martha to remedy matters. Arming herself with the sign of the Cross, she invoked the Holy Trinity and the Sacred Wounds of Our Lord. The wine became excellent and the decayed parts of the potatoes dried up, the rest was preserved.

Those of the Religious who, by their work, knew the conditions, were stupefied with astonishment, and not knowing to what these prodigies should be attributed, thought it was owing to the sanctity of their Superior. As to our Mother, she noted all and kept silence.

***

It is above all in regard to spiritual goods, that our debt of gratitude towards our dear Privileged Sister is great.

"God alone can judge of them and number them," we read in a Manuscript. This is the attestation of Superiors, who alone knew, and who thus made a résumé of their thoughts.

The community itself *knew* nothing. But although ignorant of the marvels of grace operated in our dear Sister, there was generally a special confidence in her prayers, which were considered to be most agreeable to God; consequently, in moments of trial they willingly recommended themselves to her intercession. Then, by a look or a word the pious Sisters obtained the relief needed by the suffering soul.

One day a young Sister asked her:

"What must one do, Sister Mary Martha, in order to be spoiled a little by the good God?"

Sister Mary Martha for an instant, looked fixedly at her questioner:

"Never," declared this Sister, *"never shall I forget that look! Those wide open eyes, limpid, piercing, seeming to penetrate to the depths of my soul. I experienced an indefinable sensation, the more affecting as the dear Sister was so rarely seen to raise her eyes. After some seconds, which seemed long to me, she answered with an authority at once sweet and compassionate:*

"Little Sister, you must see only Him!—Think only of Him!—Love only Him! . . . nothing but Him!"

For the same question another Sister received the answer:

"Sister, you must humble yourself well!—very—very well!"

"These counsels," adds our Mother, "were truly *the great Word of God for these souls."* (Manuscript.)

Our Superiors above all—we understand, and have already noted the fact—loved to have recourse to their dear child when a troublesome affair threatened the Community. And attentive to the prayers of His little favored Soul the Divine Master often deigned to reassure them through her humble intervention.

"I am the Guardian of this Community! I will always protect it," He said with extreme goodness.

Assurances of preservation multiplied according to the dangers. In the month of August, 1870, Our Lord had this message sent to our Mother:

"Tell the Superior not to be disturbed, you shall not be harmed."

February 29, 1871, He renewed His promises of security:

"The demon is enraged against the Community, because in it is a source of grace through the devotion to My Holy Wounds. Your Community is like a vessel on a furious sea, but it will never perish. I am its Pilot."

In 1873 and 1878 there were new assurances:

"I know all My Spouses by name—I love greatly to see those who are faithful to Me."

"Good Master, if you know us all, you will take good care of us and you will preserve to us our good Father M. Bouvier?"

"I will keep you in your Monastery, I will give you My peace, I will preserve your good Father, because He is necessary to you." (1)

These assurances became more frequent in 1880. During the Octave of Corpus Christi, as Sister Mary Martha was renewing her supplications, the Infant Jesus deigned to appear to her and placing His Finger on His Heart, He said to her:

"My daughter, although this Heart does not tell you at every moment that It will guard you, it is sufficient that It has told you once. You will have many reasons for fear, but fear not, little flock—I have promised to guard you."

May 8, 1881, our Sister was in the garden very busy with the harvests, which promised to be very fine. She was much preoccupied also with events which seemed more menacing than ever. She asked God to allow us to enjoy the beautiful fruit that He had so liberally given us:

"See, good Master, how fine it all is! and the 'wicked' wish to destroy it."

Suddenly Our Lord appeared before her full of majesty and goodness:

"My daughter," He said to her indicating with a protecting gesture our enclosure, at the upper part of which He stood, *"the 'wicked' look,—I guard!"*

(1) M. Bouvier . . . then very aged, was ill: he was cured, and was left to us for seven years.

CHAPTER XVI

SISTER MARY MARTHA AND THE BOARDING SCHOOL

"As long as you did it to one of these, My least brethren, you did it to Me."
(St. Matt. xxv, 60.)

THE Boarding School! This word evokes a past that has vanished, but a past, the memory of which remains living, as does that of the sympathetic youth whose gaiety then animated our cloister.

We have seen how, thanks to an Imperial Ordinance, the Visitation of Chambéry was reconstituted at the beginning of the last century.

Our Boarding School, which was opened September 30, 1806, was destined to last until April, 1903. It evidently had no place in the thought of the Holy Founder, and it conciliated badly enough with the strictly contemplative life. But circumstances had made it a necessity, and our Mothers, recognizing teaching as one of the forms of immolation and of the apostolate, did not believe that in the future they could withdraw *"from this task imposed by Providence and the voice of our Superiors"*. (Life of our very honored Mother Marie-Alexis Blanc.)

The Boarding School was besides, and above all, a House of Education: they were more specially occupied there with the moral and religious instruction according to the Salesian Spirit, than with the so-called education of the University programs and with the courses leading to diplomas. A number of women, accomplished in every sense of the word, there learned the secret of an exemplary life; and how many souls there were for whom the School was the vestibule of the Convent!

It was in the service of the pupils that Sister Mary Martha passed nearly all of her religious life. In confiding to her, from the Novitiate, the employment of Refectorian in the School, it is to be presumed that Superiors chose this for her in preference to other work as favoring the action of God over the dear privileged soul. Since her life thus passed in a greater solitude, a little separated from the Community, (1) she was hidden from the notice of others, and our Mothers were given an opportunity of conversing with her more readily.

In 1865, surrounded by our amiable and smiling pupils, appears the figure of Sister Mary Martha, a young professed religious of twenty-five years. Years passed, unceasingly renewing the swarms of the hive. But the same Refectorian is always there each year to receive them. Always equally active and devoted, until the day, when

(1) The Boarding School occupied a wing of our building: there, was situated the Choir, separated from the pupils' Refectory by a large corridor Near the great enclosure of the Monastery, was the pupils' recreation hall; nearby was a small cabinet where Sister Mary Martha washed and kept the dishes; this was also her little oratory where antique statues and pictures were honored by her.
The Infirmary where Sister Mary Martha had her bed, the Tribune looking into the Choir, were in the upper story.

sadly resigned, she saw close upon these children a door never to open to them again.

No former pupil—correspondence proves it—can recall her life in the school without evoking the image of the "good Sister Martha!" (1) They never considered it a fault to tease this "good Sister Martha!" They were amused at her innocence, and they sometimes abused her patience. The virtuous Sister yielded to everything without departing from her simplicity and her habitual kindness.

Sister Martha, what was the color of the white cockade worn by Henry IV?"

She answered in her patois:

"Oh, Mademoiselle, you must ask your Mistresses this. As for me, I never went to school."

"Sister, have you ever read 'Don Quixote'?"

"Mademoiselle, I do not know how to read."

"Oh, what a pity! It is a beautiful book!"

The children sometimes annoyed her in order to obtain larger pieces of fresh bread or of chocolate, and great was their amusement at her advice:

(1) The brochure of the Holy Wounds was the beginning of a considerable correspondence. At its publication letters came from our former pupils, recalling with the memories of the dear **Pensionnat,** that of the humble Sister Refectorian. The least disciplined of former times are the "proudest" today for having "known Sister Mary Martha so well".

One of them declared upon the publication of the Notice on the Servant of God, that no one had more right than she to possess it, since none had approached the good Sister so closely. Dining in penance nearly every Sunday in the little corner near the Refectory, she declares that she "enjoyed" the odd bouquets of chicken feathers with which the pious Sister ornamented the statue of the Blessed Virgin in the winter season.

"Young ladies, you should learn to eat whatever is given to you."

They surely teased Sister Mary Martha, but how greatly they loved her! and what an ascendancy this Religious, so simple and charged with such an inferior employment, exercised over the souls of these young girls! Pitiless judges on many occasions, but often very clear sighted judges, they had in her regard the intuition of an eminent virtue, and proclaimed her a Saint!

"Sister," said one of them, "they say that you see the good God."

"When you are sick and some one replaces you," observed another, "things do not go on so well."

They had proof of the efficacy of her prayers in the details of their school life. They often confided their troubles to her, and Our Lord gave His Servant words so full of the Spirit of God that they made a deep impression. They saw her already in Heaven:

"Sister, when you are in Paradise, remember such a thing . . . such a place . . . "

What took place between this pupil and Sister Martha? "We dared not question her," notes the Superior, "in order not to appear to attach importance to the matter."

"What we know," adds our Mother, "is the visible blessing that God was pleased to grant to the School since our little privileged Sister was charged with the employment. There are still surprising things to relate, such as the *miracle of the wine.*"

As Refectorian, our Sister had to prepare the wine destined for the pupils, adding some water to it: her heavenly Director ordered her to trace three times over the bottles thus prepared, the sacred sign of our Redemption, in honor of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. She acquired the habit of doing this, during June, 1867. From this date there was such an increase of wine that our very honored Mother Thérèse-Eugénie did not hesitate to compare it to the "miracle of the Wedding at Cana". *"A little less than a quart of wine,"* she writes, *"and sometimes even less, was sufficient for the meal of from fifty to sixty pupils."*

At a later date, our very honored Mother Jeanne-Françoise Breton writes:

"Each year as the time approached for the return of the pupils, Sister Mary Martha would ask her Superior if she were again to prepare the drink for the School as Our Lord had taught her to do, and the same grace was always granted her, on condition that they did not withdraw from her the permission to continue the austere life that she had been leading for so many years. We have had the same experience.

"It is not," said Jesus to Sister Mary Martha, *"to economize in regard to the wine that this grace is accorded you; but because of the glory which redounds to the August Trinity from this action done with so much faith, humility, and innocent simplicity."*

However, God permitted that the thing should pass almost unperceived. Should it happen that they were obliged to replace the Refectorian for a short time, the Sister in charge of the cellar made reflections such as these:

"I understand nothing about it! but when Sister Mary Martha serves the pupils, hardly any wine is used."

Various cures likewise attest to the happy influence of the dear Domestic Sister. Let us open the Manuscripts:

"A pupil was taken with a very violent fever, and the sickness made rapid progress, the state of the sick child became alarming. Sister Mary Martha charged with the care of her, recited the 'Memorare' with faith and new confidence. The next day the child was well.

"A still more striking incident occurred in March, 1881. One of our children had been in bed two days with a burning fever. Alarmed, we had the Sister pray for her cure. As soon as her prayer was finished the child was instantly cured, asked to get up and for something to eat . . . We could hardly believe our eyes; there was no sign of illness. She went to class at once, and no one could suspect how very ill she had been. The Sister Infirmarian was greatly astonished; and from our hearts there arose a thousand thanksgivings to God for such a favor."

It is useless to remark, as the thing is so evident, that the devoted Refectorian did not limit her preoccupations only to the material side of her employment. Always submerged in the supernatural, she thought before everything, in "her going and coming", of the souls of "our children". At every instant her prayers, her sacrifices, her solicitudes were for them.

Besides, Our Lord constantly maintained in her these thoughts of apostolic zeal. Manifesting the sentiments of

His Divine Heart in order to animate that of His docile disciple, He made known to her how much He loved our young pupils. Once at the opening of the school year:

"I take great pleasure in seeing the children return. They are My little flock, I will take care of them," said Jesus. And at another time: *"Love them as I love them,"* He said to her.

Seeing in the light of God the very pure consciences of the children, and the benefit of the good education that placed in their souls the solid foundations of true piety, Sister Mary Martha thanked Our Lord for it, and became attached to our pupils by a touching affection.

Hear her acknowledge candidly to her "Good Master" that—carried away doubtless by this sentiment of tenderness—she raised her eyes at the time of the Gospel of the Mass "to see these dear little ones", and let us hear Jesus lead her back into the wonderfully fruitful way of sacrifice:

"If you do not look at them, I will look at them, and I, Myself, will bless them."

"Carry Me everywhere with you in your work, that the pupils may find Me there," He said to her on another day.

As for her, He deigned sometimes in person to honor the pupils' Refectory by His sensible presence:

"We are coming to the feast," He kindly said to her.

In a period of spiritual aridity, after three days of painful interior desolation, our Sister, impelled by a vehement desire, at the beginning of a meal, directed to Jesus this cry from her heart.

"Good Master, You are invited to the Nuptial Feast of the Visitation in this Refectory."

"I am coming to you," answered the Savior, *"not only with My Mother, but I will bring a large number of My friends, if you wish."*

She then saw the most Blessed Virgin and numerous Saints, then the Guardian Angels of our pupils. Our Lord looked at them with pleasure. The vision lasted during the meal, without depriving Sister Mary Martha of her liberty of spirit. She continued her service, her soul inundated with happiness, without giving any exterior sign except a more profound recollection and a countenance entirely celestial. (April 9, 1869.)

Our Lord also deigned to encourage His Servant, and through her to encourage her Superior and Directress:

"The Boarding School gives Me great glory by the religious principles and the good education received by the children."

Such results evidently suppose superior qualities in the Mistresses:

"This charge requires much self-abnegation and a great interior spirit. Children carry with them into the world all their school remembrances. Therefore, the souls of your pupils should be carefully directed. The Mistresses must strongly impress upon them the necessity of remaining faithful to the frequentation of the Sacraments in spite of the difficulties of the world and of perverse nature. The frequentation of the Sacraments will be the sole means of salvation for many; without this, there are some who will not persevere."

Jesus testified His satisfaction at the devotion of the pupils to the Holy Wounds:

"I await the return of the Boarders, because they glorify Me by honoring My Holy Wounds."

During vacation the pupils propagated the devotion . . .

He was interested in their little practices of mortification:

"The dry bread at their lunch (during the war of 1870) *costs them more than your fast costs you."*

He was interested in their health:

"I will take care of the children . . . I keep them constantly before My eyes, each separately. I tell you this that you may pray for them."

One year at the period of the Easter vacation, our Mothers hesitated in regard to allowing the pupils to go out because of an epidemic which was prevalent in the city.

"He Who maintains the health of the pupils will know how to preserve them from the epidemic during their holidays."

Holy Thursday, April 6, 1871, Our Lord again insisted:

"I wish it to be noted that during the five years and two months that your bed has been in the Infirmary (1) *there has been no serious sickness."*

This bed in the Infirmary, our Sister rarely used, her divine Master wishing her ordinarily to be before the Most Blessed Sacrament. Was He not interested, in some manner, that His servant should not be obliged to care for the sick children!

(1) The pupils' Infirmary.

On the eve of First Communion, as at times of trouble, the Savior, so to speak, had Sister Mary Martha buy the graces destined for the School: prayer had to be more abundant, as the Cross weighed the more heavily. This belonged to the "task" of our Sister, as did also the care of accompanying beyond the Tomb with her prayers, those of our pupils whom God recalled to Himself, and likewise to follow with her prayers, those who were returned to their families each year at the end of their studies . . . and to the cares of life.

Never did she fail in this, and now in the hour of trial, those who have survived her, willingly raise their eyes to heaven to solicit again the protection of "good Sister Mary Martha." . . .

THE VIRTUES OF SISTER MARY MARTHA

CHAPTER XVII

FAITH, PRAYER, GRATITUDE, SIMPLICITY, CONFIDENCE ABANDONMENT

SISTER MARY MARTHA has written nothing; she has not held learned conversations in spiritual matters. So, to speak of her virtues is not to display her thoughts, it is above all, if not solely, to see her act, to see her live under the action of Our Lord. Now, thus considered, she is truly admirable: this has already been recognized in the preceding chapters.

These chapters have sufficiently displayed certain general phases of her spiritual characteristics, making it unnecessary to dwell on them more at length. Each page has revealed to us in Sister Mary Martha a soul of faith and of prayer, a grateful soul, simple, confiding, and abandoned. We shall only recall it before approaching the properly religious virtues: humility, mortification, the vowed virtues of chastity, obedience, poverty, with charity and apostolic zeal.

Faith is the fundamental base of all Christian life; God wished that it should be solidly established in the soul of our Sister. It may be said truly that from the instant that she opened her eyes to the terrestrial light, she also

opened them to the light of faith. The precious germ placed in her soul by Holy Baptism developed magnificently, to the point of making her penetrate in an astonishing manner, into the mysteries of our religion: the adorable Trinity, the Incarnation of the Word, the Redemption, the Holy Eucharist, were illuminated for her with a splendid brightness. Living in this light, Sister Mary Martha, at a very early age, had faith for her motive power and guide in her actions as in her thoughts: she lived for God alone, she acted for God alone, she saw God alone in all things:

"God is there, God sees me, God hears me."

Thus it will be during her whole life. How she will always seek the glory of God and sigh at the remembrance of the sins of men, outraging by their crimes the majesty of the God that she adored! With what ardor she will desire to cooperate in their salvation with the Savior Jesus! How greatly she will sigh for the blessed sojourn where she will be forever reunited to the object of her faith! She will accept sufferings and expiations in order to obtain this felicity for the poor souls in Purgatory. What fervor she will bring to her prayer for the Church, the world, the Fatherland, her Community! With what reverence, what humility, she will approach the divine Sacraments! . . . What love for Jesus Christ! What devotion to Mary, her tender Mother, towards our Holy Founders, the Angels, the Saints! And how many signs of the Cross in honor of the Holy Trinity!

This same spirit of faith will guide her in her relations with the neighbor and, especially, in her relations with

authority. Whether the word of the priest or of her Superior, her simple and childlike soul received it with avidity: she believed in them more than in her own lights. But of this, we shall yet speak elsewhere.

From such a lively and practical faith, there flowed naturally, as from a spring—**prayer.**

Sister Mary Martha prayed as she breathed. They still preserve in her family the remembrance of this child who at night secretly arose to pray. Later, when her young nieces came to see her at the Monastery, the pious aunt had but one recommendation upon her lips:

"See, my little ones, you must always pray. When walking out you must take your beads and say them. When you go to work in the field you must offer your labor to the good God; with this there is nothing lost."

After some pious words Sister Mary Martha would send them away:

"Now, I know nothing more to say to you."

In reality our dear Sister hardly knew how to converse with creatures. But, how well she knew how to speak to God! Like burning incense she exalted herself in sweet perfumes of love at the feet of her Beloved. The Well-Beloved was Himself her Master! Sometimes, Our Lord recalled to her the precept of incessant prayer, vocal mental, or of action. Again He invited her to the prayer that He preferred:

"Good Master, what prayer shall I make?" she asked one day upon presenting herself to Him.

"My beloved daughter, make the prayer that I have taught you, that of heart to heart with Me. No prayer is more agreeable to Me; it is better than that of the lips. I wish prayer from the heart."

Sometimes He insisted upon the beauty and the power of prayer:

"Prayer is the way to go to God and to find Him. Heaven and earth are joined together by prayer; justice gives place to mercy."

Docile to the instructions received, Sister Mary Martha was, as we have said, the perpetual *"Intercessor"* of the Monastery, and we know how well pleased God was to hear her.

But how great was the gratitude of our Sister to this good God! Jesus wishes for this gratitude in a very special manner from His chosen One. He had placed and carefully cultivated this exquisite flower in her soul.

One of the sufferings of this Privileged Soul proceeded from the ingratitude of men. God gives so much, and He is so little and so badly thanked! As for her, her heart was unceasingly in thanksgiving as it was in reparation and love. Everything gave her occasion to raise her grateful heart to the heavenly Father: the vegetables and fruits that she gathered, the rain, the sun, fire, food, the gifts of nature, and still more those of grace . . . all invited her to bless Him.

One of her loved practices was to thank Him for the primordial benefit of the Redemption. Another was to thank the Eucharistic Jesus in the souls of communicants returning from the Holy Table.

To soothe the wounds made in the Heart of Jesus by ingratitude and forgetfulness, by assuming, according to a demand of Our Lord, "the charge of expressing gratitude to Him," was to gratify one of the noblest ambitions of Sister Mary Martha.

During her Eucharistic vigils, thanksgiving was constantly united to the prayers of reparation and contemplation. For her own personal account, she returned thanks not only for ordinary graces and agreeable benefits, but also for painful and crucifying graces. This was the counsel of the good Master:

"You must receive My blows with joy and say at each pain: 'Thanks, my God!'"

Truly, if gratitude is one of the signs revealing beautiful souls, what a beautiful soul was that of our humble Sister! *"Pardon, Mercy!"* How often those two words came from her heart to her lips!

"Sister, what must we say to Jesus?" she was sometimes asked . . . "

"Two words only," she answered: *"Pardon, Mercy!" "You must always say them."*

The spirit of faith, of prayer, and of gratitude, with Sister Mary Martha, bore the seal of perfect *simplicity*. And this was one of the charms that attracted the Heart of the divine Spouse.

"Simplicity," according to Saint Francis de Sales, "is nothnothing but an act of Charity, pure and simple, which has

a single end: to acquire the love of God; and our soul is simple when we have no other pretention in all that we do." (1)

Our Sister had "no other pretention." Her purity of intention attained the degree where it becomes contemplation.

"Look at Me," said Jesus to her, *"as for Me I always look at you . . . It is the Face of a God that is turned towards you. When I have a Spouse, My Eyes are always turned towards her . . . Look at Me to imitate Me and I will look at you to purify you from your miseries"* . . .

Sister Mary Martha responded to this loving assault of the Spouse. And entire hours passed thus, above all during her Eucharistic vigils:

"Your look is sufficient for Me," said the Beloved, *"and I will look at you."*

A look of contemplation and love, which had its existence in action, and of which it was sweet to Jesus to receive the asurance, as spontaneous as it was sincere. One day whilst she was sweeping the great cloister of the Monastery, presenting Himself to her, He said:

"Are you doing this for My divine eye?"

"Yes, good Master!" she replied.

The complete abandonment of the soul of Sister Mary Martha to God, could not pass unperceived by those who approached her closely. "We felt,' said one of her companions, "that there was *nothing natural in her,* that she did not con-

(1) Entertainment XII, St. Francis de Sales.

sider herself." She did not consider herself because, similar to the servant described by the Psalmist, (1) she sought her line of conduct in God alone, without human consideration nor turning back on self.

This was the more agreeable to Our Lord as it indicated such an innocent candor. "She had truly the innocence of a child," attests her Superior. "We asked her in regard to the favor that she enjoyed of seeing the Infant Jesus every day at Holy Communion: Did you ever speak to your confessor of this when you were in the world?"

"Oh, no, Mother, I believed that everybody saw the same thing."

At the time when Our Lord asked from her three signs of the Cross to obtain the preservation of the potatoes, Sister Mary Martha, foreseeing one day that she would not be able to go down to the cellar on the next, said:

"There will be three of them for to-morrow, if you are willing, my Jesus."

In September, 1885, as she was gathering the crop of figs, by order of her Superior, she lost her balance at the top of a ladder, and catching on to the branches of the tree she exclaimed:

"Good Jesus, hold me, our Mother confided me to Thee."

Innocence, candor, a perfect uprightness thus filled her life to the point of becoming a very marked aspect of her character. Simplicity in her relations with God, with

(1) Ps. 122.

Superiors, with the neighbor, simplicity of life, of appearance, and of manner!

We cannot imagine anything in Sister Mary Martha resembling pose or affectation, any more than a constraining human respect or stiffness. After her ecstasies she returned to her ordinary occupations without any appearance of embarrassment in her manner.

There was nothing complicated in her interior life: duty, the Will of God, the service of the Community, the love of Jesus and Mary, prayer for all—these, her only objectives. In truth Jesus could say to His Beloved:

"I have fashioned your heart according to My Will and for Me. I have taken from it all turning towards the creature; I have placed therein an immense gratitude which causes it to remember My benefits; I have put there the simplicity of a child."

Moreover, He took great care to maintain and develop in His Servant this virtue of simplicity, and very particularly in her relations with Superiors, in regard to whom He was very requiring.

One day the Infant Jesus appeared to His little Servant so beautiful, so amiable, that she was plunged into an unspeakable ecstasy. Jealous to preserve for herself her entire happiness, she interiorly resolved not to speak of it to any one. Immediately, the Divine Infant reproached her for this thought:

"I love little children who resemble Me, and who tell everything with simplicity. The true child tells all to its Mother: thus, my child, you must tell everything to your Mother."

Once He asked her to carry a message to the Superior and she delayed in so doing. Appearing under the figure of a very little child—our Sister assures us that she really saw this—He asked her in a serious tone:

"Which of us is the greater? . . . "

Astonished, Sister Mary Martha answered:

"Good Master, in size I am larger than Thou art, but I am nothing before Thee."

Then Our Lord made her understand that His question carried a reproach: she had acted "the greater" in not yielding more promptly to the Divine Will.

Reproaches of this kind did not diminish the confidence of Sister Mary Martha. She had understood only too well the lesson of the Master:

"The way of love and of confidence is that in which I love to see My Spouses walk. Other ways are less sure and too difficult."

However, for our Sister confidence was not without difficulty. Her delicacy of conscience, her ardent love for Jesus would have inclined her to be afflicted to excess on account of certain faults that were purely exterior. On the other side, if the favors of heaven were liberally bestowed upon her, let us not forget that she likewise had to experience moral anguish, doubts, uncertainties regarding her way, vexations, and even furious assaults of the demon.

In these distressing moments her refuge was steadfast faith in the goodness of God and in the word of His repre-

sentatives. Thus armed, Sister Mary Martha triumphed over all attacks, and kept her confidence simple and serene. Besides, had she not as a supreme refuge the very Heart of her Beloved Jesus? In effect, if He had chosen His victim and "crucified her" in a thousand manners, Jesus, in compensation, took care to defend her from all exaggerated fears:

"Cast yourself into My arms," He said to her, *"there, no one can perish. I do not wish you to have the least distrust. Love, and not fear, is My Will."*

Favored with daily Communion, our Sister sometimes hesitated to approach the Holy Table; she thought herself too great a sinner.

"My good Jesus," she said one morning in her anxiety, *"our Mother wishes me to communicate."*

"Come then to Me without disquietude," answered the good Master. *"You will do as the little chicken that closes its eyes in hiding under the wing of its mother."*

One day in September, 1875, our Sister was tormented more than usual, by the evil spirit. While continuing her work, she began to sing in her ordinary manner as a challenge to the enemy:

"O Eternal Father, I offer Thee the five Wounds of Thy Son Jesus, in order to obtain for the world and for our Sisters, the healing of our Wounds, and deliverance for the holy souls in Purgatory."

This voice, so inharmonious to the ears of creatures, penetrated Heaven . . . Jesus, in response, ran very quickly

to console His Spouse by telling her of the value and beauty of such a canticle.

An infidelity having disturbed her soul, Our Lord said to her:

"Come to Me, you are a little child . . . A father is not offended, nor does he mind the foolish actions of very little children. I love little children . . . I love souls that come to Me with confidence after their faults."

"My daughter," He said to her on another occasion, *"I am with you day and night, present in your heart, and I shall remain there without interruption as long as you keep yourself as you are. I wish you to be little, humble, buried in your nothingness."*

Our Sister questioned innocently:

"My good Jesus, when I commit faults how canst Thou remain with me."

"You are like a child who offends his father without knowing it," replied the Savior, *"as soon as he perceives it, he runs to his father, who forgets all."*

It seemed to Sister Mary Martha, that her union with Jesus *was the more intimate and perfect as her misery was greater:*

"My Jesus, I expect all from Thee alone, because I am nothing but misery."

"Abandonment" is a condition of humility, faith, and confidence.

In ordinary circumstances it was not very difficult for our Sister to practice this abandonment. She loved our Lord so much, that she sought His good pleasure in everything, always ready to sacrifice the divine consolations of prayer for the obscure and painful work of her employments.

But during the course of a way sown with painful trials, a yielding and total abandonment under the Hand of God sometimes required true immolation.

During the years of fasting required by the Master, there were hours when the poor child, nearly exhausted, had the instinctive impression that she should die of weakness. What generosity and abandonment were then necessary to her that she might conform to the recommendations of Our Lord:

"Do not be disquieted . . . await the signal of My good pleasure for returning to the Refectory."

It was the same in the crucifying perplexities regarding her extraordinary ways, with their cortège of humiliations and dangers . . . To be *"le jouet d' Amour"* of Jesus included all this. Sister Mary Martha conformed to it with docility.

"Mother," she acknowledged to her Superior, *"I see that Our Lord is always more and more my Master: I do not what I wish, but what He wishes."*

Had our Sister a great struggle in order to reach this point? Was the progress slow or rapid? It is not easy to answer . . . Whatever it may have been, she seems to have advanced very far in the way so dear to our Holy Founder.

Five or six months before her decease, says her Spiritual Aid, we asked her if she feared death or if she dsired it. With an expression of intense desire, and as if she already enjoyed the delights of divine union and eternal beatitude so many times foreseen by her, she exclaimed:

"Oh, I should well love to die." Then immediately checking herself: *"But, I love rather to do the Will of God. To live or to die is nothing provided I do the Will of God."*

"Yes, we understand, but are you not afraid of Purgatory?"

"Oh, well! I do not think of it, I abandon myself. May His Will be done! **as for me, I abandon myself.'"**

CHAPTER XVIII

THE HUMILITY OF SISTER MARY MARTHA

> "The greatest Saints in the eyes of God are the smallest in their own eyes, and the more sublime their vocation the more they are humble of heart."
> (Imi. of Jesus Christ, Bk. II-10-17.)

HUMILITY was incontestably the fundamental dominating virtue of Sister Mary Martha. Such is the testimony of all who knew her.

"At the time of her decease," writes our very honored Mother Jeanne-Françoise Breton, her companions were unanimous in rendering homage to her rare humility. Although it seems that Our Lord may have predisposed and incited her on this point, and also particularly assisted her, there are but few lives where the supply of grace is more manifest.

We have already heard some of the calls of the Divine Master. They could not be more pressing:

"My daughter, if you do not humble yourself, you will not follow the way that I have traced for you to come to Me. All the glory of earthly kings is here below; but although

all glory is due to Him, Jesus has not sought His, except in humility and suffering . . . You will not be a true Spouse if you do not love to be humilated." And to give a practical lesson He adds: *"You must have no other desire than to be despised and treated as you deserve."*

Often Our Lord gives to His Servant a clear knowledge of the good that is found in the souls of her Sisters, placing in comparison the picture of her own misery.

"I cannot make of you all that I wish, and even a great part of what you do, is done because Superiors have made you do it . . . But I always choose the most miserable creatures upon whom to bestow My gifts. . . ."

And the Savior invited His Spouse to plunge herself into the salutary conviction of her nothingness, indicating to her the source whence she should draw the virtue so dear to His meek and humble Heart. He lovingly said to her:

"Steep your soul therein. Come like the turtle dove to hide yourself in this sacred cavity, and I will cover you with a mantle of humility!"

He insists still more in showing humility to be the condition and pledge of divine favors:

"When a soul humbles and annihilates herself, she attracts Me as the magnet attracts the iron! . . . I abandoned My glory, I abased Myself, I have made Myself very little in order to come to you . . . and you, in order to be ready to receive My graces, must greatly annihilate yourself, for I regard only the humble heart."

This was to mark out for her a magnificent program—Sister Mary Martha knew how to conform herself to it. She kept herself in humility in order to attract Jesus with His graces; and Jesus, coming with His graces, increased in her the thirst for humility: this sums up all. From contact with Jesus she maintained that humility which is, according to Father Faber, the perfume of God, the mark that the Creator leaves upon the creature when He has clasped it for an instant. (1) Our Lord having given to her Himself, this formal order, of such admirable depth:

"My Heart works only by the stamp of humility," she felt the need of speaking and acting in consequence.

January 1, 1870, our Sister was very near the pupils' Refectory, occupied in washing the dishes, when Heaven suddenly filled this humble spot. Visitandines and a phalanx of the Blessed appeared to her. In her transport of joy the pious Sister exclaimed:

"Do you wish to take a message from me to Our Lord? Tell Him that I am . . . **a sinner."**

After a night of much moral and physical suffering, feeling exhausted and incapable of attending to her work, Sister Mary Martha remained at the Choir door. It seemed to her that there she would have more easy access to the Master. And humbling herself profoundly there, before His divine Majesty:

"Good Master," she said, *"I am Thy poor creature, give me alms, give me strength."*

(1) "The Foot of the Cross", Father Faber.

One day our Sister had constantly offered the Holy Wounds of Our Lord for the conversion of poor sinners; she had, moreover, the inspiration to go to the foot of the great "Miraculous Christ", humbling herself in the name of all creatures. The sweet Jesus received her with tenderness and in an ineffable voice said to her:

"My love receives this act of humility as if, in reality, all My creatures were humiliating themselves at My Feet."

Heavenly favors always penetrated her the more with sentiments of her own personal misery.

"My daughter," her divine Master taught her, *"when I abase you, you must humble yourself greatly, but when I elevate you by giving you my graces, you must humble yourself still more."*

In fact, notes the Manuscript, each time that this dear soul is obliged through obedience, to render an account of what is advantageous to her, as well as of the graces with which she is favored, it is for her an extreme confusion, a real martyrdom!

Such sentiments regulated her attitude, not only before God, but in all the details of her daily life. Our Lord maintained her constantly and strongly in humility, both interior and exterior.

To our Sister Assistant who interrogated her on her intimate relations with the divine Master, Sister Mary Martha confided with charming simplicity:

"When I have failed in humility, He hides Himself and does not return until I have made reparation . . . It is necessary

only to be very humble and little to cause Him to return! . . . Oh, how much He loves this! . . . I must not delay in asking pardon, I must ask it immediately. One cannot live without Him! When I have displeased our Sisters, when I have been rude or stubborn, the little Jesus goes away . . . and Oh, how sad this is! I go to the Choir, but I do not find Him—then, I go out to look for the Sister and ask pardon—He returns! We two cannot live separated!

"Yesterday, upon entering the vestibule of the Choir, I left the door open, because a Sister with a heavy load was following. Another Sister passed by and closed the door. I went back, opened the door, and said: 'What good sense! do you not see a Sister coming with a load?' I had hardly said the word when the little Jesus had gone . . . I had no peace, I had to ask pardon. I looked for the Sister and saw her just as she was entering the Refectory. I said to her hurriedly: 'Pardon me, I am a proud creature.' Then I was more tranquil . . . but it was not until the Obedience, when I asked her pardon as the Rule requires, that the little Jesus returned."

Here may be seen—just to note it in passing—what were the faults of Sister Mary Martha. Sometimes it was an impoliteness, when she was carried away by her natural vivacity, or rather a certain insistance in forcing an idea that she believed advantageous to the common good, or a manner of acting, which seemed out of the way, because her true motives were not known. As to the gravity of the faults, they never went beyond the first movement. Never did our good Sister reply in a proud or wounding manner; never did she utter a word disobliging to her Sisters, still less give testimony of resentment or selfishness. And we

repeat that the reparation was always made in an edifying manner. She was truly exemplary in the practice of this Article of the Directory, and she counselled it to the young Sisters who asked her the means of pleasing Jesus.

The personal fidelity of our Sister on this point was not always, in its perfection, without annoyance to the neighbor. One day, believing that she had failed in respect to the Sister Dispenser, she went to her just a little before the meal:

"Pardon me, my Sister," she said:

The poor Officer, exceedingly busy, finds excuses inopportune:

"But, Sister Mary Martha, this is not the time!"

"Pardon, Sister, pardon!" continues our humble Sister, yet remaining on her knees.

More and more "annoyed" the dear Dispenser turns towards another Sister, who was a mute witness of the little scene:

"You see, Sister Mary Martha, you are also disturbing Sister N——".

Sister Mary Martha answered simply and gently:

"Oh, Sister N. loves me very much!"

"A word," adds Sister N—— after the death of our Privileged Sister, "which remains with me as a very sweet souvenir".

Other testimonies are to be cited. This is from a Sister who was for a long time Assistant of the Community:

"What struck me most in our relations as "Spiritual Aid" was, with the purity, candor, and simplicity of her soul, the rare and profund humility of Sister Mary Martha. She appeared to be molded in it. We could return repeatedly to the charge for certain exterior failings: forgetfulness, etc. She would bow her head in a contrite and confused manner:

"True, very true, Sister Assistant! I shall try to do better; I am so rude!"

She always employed this expression, which, on her lips, signified *uncultivated, unpolished.*

"Sometimes she seemed to be *'unyielding',"* as she said, but we have never had the impression that she had in this any voluntary obstinacy; she followed what she believed to be her conscience and her duty."

"She followed her conscience!" . . . A very fine and exact word, which brightly illumines the soul of Sister Mary Martha.

A Sister of the White Veil, full of veneration for her companion, whose "Spiritual Aid" she also was, sought to penetrate into the secret of this soul. She gives assurance that she has no doubt but that Sister Mary Martha was thoroughly humble, and "always most faithful to her conscience" and to the views of perfection "in the measure in which she understood things! . . . "

On a certain occasion Sister Mary Martha, having insisted a little too strongly with a Sister, drew upon herself some rather mortifying words. She did not delay in returning to express gratitude:

"My Sister," she said humbly, *"you have enlightened my conscience . . . "*

Thus it was, that light alone was wanting to her intelligence, and she was full of gratitude towards any one who showed her her defects and her duty.

The very graces that God bestowed upon her served as a subject to exercise her humility . . . How many little rebuffs and distressing remarks did she not have to endure when, having been absorbed in God, she would arrive too late, according to their wish, to aid our Sisters in the kitchen!

"Oh," they sometimes said, "it is very convenient to remain quietly in prayer, leaving all the trouble to others."

Or, sometimes, there were joking words that caused the dear Sister a cruel embarrassment: What a beautiful Canticle our Sisters sang at the Exposition of the Most Blessed Sacrament.

"They sang?" exclaimed Sister Mary Martha, involuntarily betraying the secret of the Spouse, Who had transported her in ecstasy.

"What? You heard nothing? . . . Ah, surely, you were in ecstasy!" . . .

What confusion for our Sister! She remained silent, blushed, and visibly suffered to be thus the object of the attention of her companions.

One day after a similar scene, a Choir Sister, who chanced to pass, pitied her and tried to console her:

"Let them talk, my good Sister Mary Martha, all this signifies nothing, and will not prevent you from enjoying the favors of Our Lord."

But becoming still more deeply sad, Sister Mary Martha answered gently:

"Oh, my Sister! are you very sure of this? Is it truly He?"

Her humility always made her fearful, always urged her to the most profound silence, retrenching every return on so many divine favors.

Suffering from an attack of erysipelas, which kept her in the Infirmary, she piously occupied her leisure in reciting, with a sick companion, the dear invocations that she had received from the mouth of the Savior.

"My Jesus, pardon and mercy—Through the merits of Thy Holy Wounds."

"Eternal Father, I offer Thee the Wounds of Our Lord Jesus Christ—to heal the wounds of our souls."

A Sister, who was not attracted to the devotion of the Holy Wounds, or rather, to the introduction of the new prayer, interrupted with some animation:

"Sister, you must not say it that way . . . You will not gain the indulgences—you must say only:

"My Jesus, mercy!"

Sister Mary Martha, with humble condescension, continued to pray, saying only: "My Jesus, mercy!"

Here is another similar fact. It was in the kitchen; our Domestic Sisters were about to commence the invocations to

the Holy Wounds, when one of them made this remark: "Why should we say: 'Pardon and Mercy'?"

"This," carelessly replied another, "is *an invention* of Sister Mary Martha."

"These invocations are, however, very agreeable to Our Lord," said Sister Martha, a little annoyed.

Then she withdrew into her habitual recollection. Never, adds the Sister who relates this fact, did Sister Mary Martha say anything of the graces received. Sometimes they rallied her. When in reading there was question of mysterious states, those of her companions who suspected some little the "secret of the King" risked a word:

"You well know all about this, do you not Sister Mary Martha?"

And our good Sister would laugh heartily: this was her only response.

"Once there was read in the Refectory the life of a Saint who remained a long time without eating. Not knowing that this had been the case with our dear Sister, I approached her on leaving the table, saying: 'This Saint remained a long time without eating anything.' Sister Martha was silent for an instant, then continued the recreation."

At the time of the visit in our Monastery of the very honored Mother Marie-Emmanuelle de Gand, (1) on her way in 1904, to Ravigliasco, she asked to see in private our

(1) Superior of our Monastery of Romans. This Community still remembers the words of the Rev. Father Ambroise in regard to the "favored soul of Chambéry." "Oh, Sisters," said this fervent Religious in finishing his talk: "There is the making of a Saint."

pious Sister, whom she had known for a long time through the accounts of the Rev. Father Ambroise and the letters of our former Superiors. The conversation lasted for more than an hour. We know that the worthy and holy Superior preserved a deep esteem for the humble Domestic Sister; who said afterwards to our Sister Assistant with admirable penetration:

"Oh, how humble this Mother is! . . . how humble! . . . Could you believe it! She asked me if I thought that Our Lord was pleased with her! . . ."

Our dear Sister never thought for a moment that there was any flattery intended for her in the question.

Not only did Sister Mary Martha keep silence in regard to the divine favors of which she was the object, but she seemed even to be a stranger to a knowledge of spiritual things, so lowly did she keep herself. It must be said that from the beginning of her supernatural graces, our venerated Mothers had recommended to her not to speak of her prayer: simple and innocent as a child, she would have betrayed herself unawares. (1)

(1) Some confidential communications made to one of our Sisters and mentioned in the course of our narrative, may seem astonishing here. We ourselves would be astonished did we not see in this a special permission of God. When in 1906, our good Sister heard herself named as Spiritual Aid to our Honored Sister Assistant, she was perhaps a little disturbed:

"I think that I am soon going to die," she said to her dear Sister Marie-Jacqueline, as I have never before had a Choir Sister for Angel" (Aid).

Perhaps she had a presentiment of the words that might escape her, so to say, during the course of these more intimate conversations. . . .

Let us also add, that Our Lord, jealous to the end to keep His humble Spouse hidden, permitted that whilst having entire faith in the confidences of our Sister Mary Martha, our Sister Assistant did not then attach great importance to them.

When they tried to obtain some devout words from her, she to whom Jesus unveiled His most intimate secrets neither knew, nor would say anything. She had but a single word on her lips:

"Sister, you must humble yourself . . . humble yourself well . . . All is in this!"

"Sister Mary Martha, I am in aridity, give me your way of causing Our Lord to come."

"Oh, it is not difficult! It is only to humble one's self! To humble one's self greatly!" she repeated, whilst the expression of her countenance seemed to add:

"Oh, if one knew what a treasure it is for a soul to be able to humble itself! This is the Key to all graces!"

Sometimes, however, by exception, Sister Mary Martha entered into more details in order to conform to the desires of Our Lord. Our very honored Mother Thérèse-Eugénie believed that she should note among others, the following counsels:

"This is what Jesus inspired His little Servant to say to a young working girl whom they were about to admit to the Novitiate:

"When you shall have entered the Novitiate do not think yourself above other working girls . . . treat with them in all humility . . . You must always put yourself under the feet of every one and believe that if you do something good, it is with the help of God . . . When approved, say that it is God who has done all! If you are disapproved, place yourself in accord with the neighbor and humble yourself still more!

Then you shall have all that may be necessary to you to become a good religious. To be humble and to work under the eye of God: Behold all!" (August, 1869.)

These few words appear to us, at this time, specially well placed, addressed as they were—we have reason to suppose—to one of our regretted Sisters of the White Veil, whose bright intelligence, ability, and unwearying devotedness, were to be so useful to Superiors and to the Community. Jesus doubtless wished to protect her virtue from the snare of vain complacency. So many precious gifts were to obtain for her in the future, success, praise, and testimonies of satisfaction.

Such was not the case with Sister Mary Martha. It might be believed that favored by Heaven, she would also be by Superiors. But the contrary was the truth.

From the beginning, her Mistress, our very honored Sister Marie-Alexis Blanc, whilst admiring in her novice the work of God, guided her with a firm and strong hand, and made it her line of conduct to humble her constantly.

With the exception, perhaps, of our Mother Thérèse-Eugénie, Superiors spared her neither in public nor in private, and corrected sharply the smallest forgetfulness, the least appearance of imperfection.

But the rod of correction fell upon a foundation of humility prepared for any trial. The countenance of Sister Mary Martha took, on such occasions, an air of extraordinary jubilation, allied to a profound annihilation . . . She seemed to withdraw into herself, and to vanish, so much did her exterior attitude betray the sentiments of her soul. This

humble and annihilated appearance, was, furthermore, her habitual expression, that she retained even in times of exaltation. But, when corrected, she was inimitable. Some young Domestic Sisters were almost jealous of it and said to her:

"This does not cost you anything. You relish corrections as a delicacy."

"Oh, little one," she returns, *"everything within is disturbed, but I do not consider it, it does so much good to the soul . . . And then it gives Him pleasure!"*

Her heart did not feel the less sensibly the little difficulties of Community life, more frequent for her, perhaps, because of her little familiarity with "human and earthly things", and a certain lack of politeness and agreeable manmanners. But she endured it all with generosity.

"It was useless for her to be cordial," said one of her young companions, "she was often badly received." When she came, during the pupils' vacation, to offer her assistance to her companions, her obliging offers were not always welcomed with good grace: "Go, pray . . . we do not need you!"

Confiding to her Spiritual Aid some little difficulties in her work, Sister Mary Martha added simply:

"Well, yes! on earth we are not Angels, we know it well, and Our Lord knows it also! We are not Angels! This word always does me good: it was my brother who said it to me.

"After the family affairs were settled, my brothers came to see me. I said to them: 'Well, brothers, has everything ended well? did you dispute?"

"Oh, yes, it is finished all right; but it is true there was a little 'cackling'."

"Ah! that is for a hen!"

"What do you expect, Sister? We are not angels."

The sentiment of human misery! It was so deeply anchored in the soul of our Sister, that it was plainly seen in her conversations. She was once asked if she hoped to go straight to Heaven!

"Oh, no," she replied, *"one is so full of imperfections . . . there is nothing truly good in us. Looking at the good God, one sees in self only sin and misery; even what we think to have done well, even to the holiest actions, all is spoiled by our self-love . . . No, there is nothing good in us! We must humble ourselves and abandon all to Our Lord."*

No! self-love spoiled but very little in Sister Mary Martha . . . However, under the form of "vain complacency," it tried sometimes to slip in.

One day, she gloried over one of her companions because " a bottle of wine that she was carrying, fell on the stone sink and was not broken". Another time, "'she said to herself with some satisfaction that, for several months none of the lamps with which she was charged had needed replenishing."

Or again, having witnessed a waste caused by a Sister, she had a thought of self-esteem, to the effect that she was more careful.

But each time, the interior movement in her soul caused a keen regret, with a renewal of humility. Besides, Our

Lord knew how to punish these imperfections and show her the conclusion:

"Know now what you are, and give an account of all to your Superior."

May we relate a fact . . . which will display the innocent familiarity of Sister Mary Martha? In 1878, the caterpillars had overrun the gooseberry bushes in the garden. The crop seemed lost, but the prayers said by our Sister by order of our very honored Mother on July 2, were heard.

The 27th of the same month, on visiting one of our sick Sisters in the Infirmary, she thought she could recreate her in relating "this event." Did she show a little glory in it? It may be supposed that she did for the Savior reprimanded her:

"Proud creature that you are! I shall know how to show you what you are worth!"

"Good Master, what will You do? Will You put back the caterpillars?"

Did the good God put back the caterpillars? We do not know; but two days afterwards, the gooseberry bushes were entirely covered with them. And Jesus formulated for Sister Mary Martha this strong lesson:

"My daughter, though all the fruits should perish, it would be nothing; but what is something, is to have shown you your fault."

How true it is that Our Lord watching over the soul of His Spouse wished to fill it with humility! Humility is priceless in the penetrating eyes of the Savior: the other

virtues are only false virtues if this is not the base. All the graces of God are lost there, where humility fails to guard their safety. According to the teaching of Saint Francis de Sales, our Lord goes so far as to risk that all virtues may be lost, provided that humility be preserved.

We shall terminate this Chapter by the account of a favor, which left in our Sister an ineffaceable impression.

In the course of a familiar conversation with the Divine Master, Sister Mary Martha was suddenly transported into Heaven. She ascended, always approaching nearer to the Beloved. The Saints gave her a choice place in their ranks, chanting in chorus in a ravishing voice:

He who has been the **smallest** has become the **greatest!"**

What she then understood most clearly was the reality and the depth of her nothingness. She saw herself little . . . little and despoiled of all, having absolutely nothing . . . But her heart overflowed with an immense gratitude towards *the great God, so good to His little Nothing.*

From this grace, there remained to her the most insatiable need of annihilating herself more, for she felt better than she had ever done, that it is necessary to humble one's self absolutely in order to reach Heaven!

"Et exaltavit humiles!"

"Dear Sister Mary Martha! your desire of a low and hidden life has been fully heard. You passed here below unknown, ignored, sometimes perhaps, disdained. From above, obtain for your younger Sisters this same humility that forces the Heart of God—and the Gates of Heaven!

CHAPTER XIX

THE SPIRIT OF MORTIFICATION AND OF PENANCE

"I fill up in those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh."
(Coloss. I-24.)

"YOU are dead to the world and to yourself to live no longer but to God," is said to the Visitandine Religious on the day of her Profession. This labor of mortification suggested in the energetic expression of the Ceremonial, cannot be the work of a day . . . it is a long labor, incessant, and always to be recommenced.

From the first years of her religious career Sister Mary Martha undertook it with generosity, under the impulse of Our Lord, Who urged her *"to choose in all things and everywhere, that in which there was the most mortification."* To the interior and hidden abnegation which the practice of the evangelical counsels suppose, to the multiplied renunciations claimed by a constant fidelity to the Rule, she joined, to a rare degree, exterior mortification. Never was she seen to depart from a holy rigor over herself.

In the Refectory, she took indifferently, according to the counsel of the Apostle, "whatever was presented to

her", and if it was permitted her to choose, she always arranged so as to leave the best for others.

She had generally a very good appetite, so the suppression of nourishment must have cost her much. Jesus, however, sometimes demanded of her the privation of a part of her portions: *"Because I am poor,"* He said to her.

Like ordinary mortals, she would have appreciated on some occasions, a more delicate choice, but it was precisely upon this thing that the Divine "Poor Man" had fixed His choice. . . . And He had such fine arguments to convince His Servant! such touching appeals to move her heart! Let us read the Manuscript: Our sweet Savior appeared to her one day crucified, after having been forced to drink the vinegar and gall. This sight transpierced the soul of Sister Mary Martha with such a poignant sorrow that she never lost the memory of it.

"My daughter," her good Master said to her, *"you must quench My thirst by mortification. You must compensate Me for so many gross faults which are committed in eating and drinking."*

It was specially during the days when the world is given over to pleasure and disorders, that Jesus expected to find an indemnity in His Elect One. In 1868, He warned her to prepare for a redoubling of expiatory sufferings to repair the sins of intemperance, that are committed during the Carnival time.

From this day, all that the Servant of God took towards evening in manner of nourishment, even a simple little soup, caused her intense pains. This was the prelude of the

"great fast" which was soon to be demanded from her, and of which we have spoken elsewhere.

However, in spite of the weakness caused by the privation of nourishment, Our Lord wished that she should keep close to her work. He aided her, visibly or invisibly, in a manner so real that she could perform it all.

This assiduity to work, in spite of sufferings of all kinds, was for Sister Mary Martha a trait of virtue that we may qualify as heroic; and this heroism did not relax a single day until the end of her life.

It is above all in the domain of afflicting penance that her courage caused admiration. Doubtless, she did not escape ordinary conditions. Great was her sensibility! She felt corporal sufferings intensely . . . Suffering is so much against nature! But she knew so well how to give to Jesus! and Jesus knew so well that He could ask all!

To suffer *like Jesus, and with Jesus!* was always for the Privileged One of His Heart a powerful incentive to penance. This effective union with the Passion of the Master dated from the first years of her religious life.

A light from Heaven had, at this period, given her such a profound knowledge of her faults, that she felt herself to be the most miserable creature in the world. Whilst she humbled, herself descending even into the abyss of her nothingness, Our Lord granted her a thrilling view of His Holy Passion, ordered her to unite herself to His divine sufferings, to ask permission to take the discipline four times on Fridays.

The permission was solicited and obtained, and our dear Sister responded with such courage, that each time the discipline was bloody.

Shortly after, Jesus invites her to add another, every Thursday, if Superiors consented to it, without forgetting those of Mondays and Wednesdays to honor His scourging. *"The blows of the scourging glorify Me, because they are shown as an example to My children."*

We recall that in 1866, He Himself had taught His Servant to weave a **crown of thorns.** Some years later, He required still more:

Your crown does not make you suffer enough," He said one day. *"Go, find your Mistress; she has something that will replace it, and which just fits your head."*

The generous novice went, and in all simplicity related to our very honored Sister Marie-Alexis Blanc, the order that she had just received. Our honored Sister replied:

"No, I have nothing." Then, after reflection, she added: "We have an iron girdle; but this cannot fit your head . . . however, let us see."

The girdle is tried on, it fits well, going around the head like a crown, and as if the measure had been taken.

This girdle or crown was covered with iron points, and was very painful to her . . . Sister Mary Martha was tempted to discard it. But Jesus Christ appeared to her on the Cross in frightful sufferings, His brow transpierced with cruel thorns; great tears flowed from His divine eyes . . . and the redeeming Blood escaped from all the wounds of His sacred Head:

"My daughter, I do not take off My crown," the Savior said to her as a loving reproach.

At these words our Sister was greatly confused; she courageously resumed the crown, and never hesitated afterwards.

The **rough cilice** that this dear Victim wore day and night, according to the order of Our Lord—an order sanctioned by Obedience—also caused her to suffer intensely. One day she was preparing to leave it off. In order to encourage her, her good Master said to her:

"My daughter, I give you this pain that you may gain My love."

Then uncovering His Wounds:

"See, My Daughter, how much I have suffered for you! . . . Could you ever suffer too much for Me?"

Still another time she was about to yield to the temptation of leaving it off, so painful it was to her, when Jesus prevented her from doing so by these words:

"I wish to make you suffer in proportion as I am offended. You should recall that you are My Spouse and the Victim of My love."

Afterwards, having made her enjoy for some instants the delights of Heaven, He added:

"Is it not worth the trouble to suffer in order to merit such happiness?"

"But it is necessary that in advance you must be, as I was, all torn by your cilice."

In 1881, the very honored Mother Thérèse-Eugénie Revel gave this testimony in regard to Sister Mary Martha:

"For more than thirteen years she passed her nights before the Most Blessed Sacrament or stretched on the floor of her cell with her instruments of penance, her crown, iron bracelet, cilice, excepting some time when she was very sick, and two or three weeks during the great cold of winter, when we required her to go bed.

In all this, our Sister obeyed the express Will of the Master of her soul. One evening when she was very much fatigued, Sister Mary Martha would have desired very much to pass the night in her bed. We said to her:

"Well! ask Our Lord for permission to take your rest in bed in union with that which He took in His cradle."

Jesus permitted it. But an hour hardly passed when He called His Servant and said to her:

"Although your request may have honored My Holy Infancy, it is not here that you should remain, My daughter."

And Sister Mary Martha was obliged to rise in order to obey the divine voice.

"Sometimes she suffered much; again her heart is united to Jesus Crucified in such an intimate manner that she no longer feels corporal sufferings, so completely is her soul inundated with consolation.

"It is remarkable that after nights of excessive pain, she finds herself on the next day as strong and vigorous as a person who had enjoyed perfect rest." (Manuscript.)

For the rest, the Savior sometimes recompensed the generosity of His faithful Spouse in not permitting that she should remain without relief.

January 13, 1869, our dear Sister had just gone to bed when Our Lord testified to her the desire of seeing her pass the night on the floor. She did not hesitate in rising. She did not feel the excessive cold of this night; it seemed to her, on the contrary, that she had at each side a furnace that warmed her.

Our Holy Founders also made paternal visits to their humble and heroic daughter. Once, with her usual simplicity, she was emboldened to ask Saint Francis de Sales if nights passed on the floor were pleasing to him:

"Yes," he answered, *"because it is the way that God has chosen for you; but this cannot be commanded . . . it is God who asks it, and of Whom He pleases."*

CHAPTER XX

SISTER MARY MARTHA AND THE RELIGIOUS LIFE

"I have loved thee with an eternal love; therefore, I have drawn thee having pity on thee."
(Jerem. XXI. 3.)

IT HAS been said of the religious vocation that if it is given to the soul called, to appreciate during this life in a certain manner the grace bestowed, it is in eternity alone, that the value will be understood.

To be drawn from the crowd, reserved for the direct and unique service of the divine Majesty, to be *"espoused"* to the Son of God, called to cooperate in a special manner in the salvation of souls, is a benefit which surpasses all human views and ambitions, the thought of which incessantly inundates the heart with an unspeakable gratitude.

For this favor Sister Mary Martha had a sentiment as ardent as it was profoundly supernatural. She loved her vocation! *"She esteemed it above everything"*, notes her Superior after having recalled certain attempts of the devil to suggest to our Sister that she could have secured her salvation better in the world.

So what a joy it was for Sister Mary Martha to hear the Master say to her:

"You know why I have chosen you. My daughter, it is because of your misery. It is for My glory and for the salvation of souls."

"My daughter, I wish that you should thank Me for your call to the religious life, for there are so many consecrated souls who do not think of doing so."

And with what ardor did she not give herself without reserve to respond to all the intentions of the divine Spouse!

It was at the time of the **Annual Retreat** that our Sister particularly enjoyed the benefits of her vocation. This epoch had for her incomparable charms and advantages.

Our Lord loved to become her "book" and the Guide of her soul:

"You have the treasure of books since you have Me. I have need only of your heart and you have need of no other books than Mine: you will open your heart, you will make it very lowly, and I will fill it.

"To desire a book in order to find Me, is to lose your time. My daughter, you must keep yourself near Me, forgetting all in order to look at Me in your heart. Thus united to Me in recollection, My love will penetrate you, will render you more silent, sweeter with the neighbor, and by this means you will live a heavenly life."

"Oh, Sister, this is my ardent desire!" added the pious child. The interior joy experienced during these blessed days was sometimes reflected exteriorly. More than one Sister among her companions preserves the remembrance of this

countenance at once recollected and inflamed, which she bore to the recreation, where each evening the Sisters in Retreat meet.

And what shall be said of the Holy Renovation that came to crown the work of the Retreats? The Feast of the Presentation was, undoubtedly, one of the dearest and sweetest to her soul. Its recurrence always caused her a delightful ardor, mingled, however, with a respectful apprehension because of the grandeur of the ceremony of this day,—a ceremony that Saint Francis de Sales has rendered particularly touching and expressive.

Each Religious of the Visitation pronounces in turn the formula that reiterates her consecration to the Spouse of Virgins, and immediately the priest—who holds the ciborium in his hands—responds in presenting to her the Sacred Host:

"May the Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ guard your soul to eternal life!"

On one November 21, as Sister Mary Martha stopped breathless in the midst of the words of the Renovation, the Savior, full of goodness, said to her:

"My daughter, I await you! . . . I love your heart much better than your words." (1880.)

Another year, on the same feast, Our Lord showed His Beloved the espoused souls who were approaching the Spouse . . . All were in His Heart, some buried very deeply, others less . . . And Jesus said:

"Memoria in aeternum!"

Filled with surprise the ignorant child asked:

"Good Master, what does this mean? I do not understand these words."

"My daughter," answered Jesus with tenderness, *"This action will be eternal!"* (1873.)

The happy Privileged Soul, moreover, saw the divine Master uniting to Himself the soul of each Spouse by a chain of most pure gold and of a marvelous beauty . . . a link was added to this chain. At the same time she received such intense lights on the value of the religious Vows and the worth of each renovation, that her ardent desires for Heaven, for an instant yielded place to that of living, in order to accomplish many times more such a meritorious action.

The love of Sister Mary Martha for her vocation was continually nourished by her supernatural relations with **the Saints of the Visitation Family.**

Among the consolations of a religious soul, one is particularly sweet: that of living in intimacy with the holy Founders of her Institute. These glorious Saints—who remain simply for other persons, even the most fervent, friends or powerful protectors—are for her in all the reality of the word, a *Father* and a *Mother:* they have given her the life that she enjoys in God. To nourish herself with their writings, where they still speak, is a most loved duty. She approaches very near to Saints who are ordinarily venerated at a distance. She sees them as much on earth as in heaven; they seem present beside her, lending themselves

to a delightful familiarity whilst offering themselves for her imitation.

This was truly the case with Sister Mary Martha. She lived with our Holy Founders in an habitual contact and an astonishing intimacy, confiding to them all her needs, presenting her requests to them, and receiving from them counsels and encouragements accompanied by marks of tenderness which ravished her soul.

Saint Francis de Sales was notably pleased in conversing with his humble daughter. How many times in the course of our pages have we not collected the echoes of these charming conversations between Father and Child which recalled the Entertainments of the Gallery. (Annecy).

"Adieu, my daughter, I love you much, He concluded one day. *As for you, you see Me. Your Sisters do not see Me, nevertheless I am looking at them in all their actions . . . Your Holy Mother and your Sisters are there also, very near."*

The evening of December 28, 1868, whilst, after Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament, we were venerating the relics of our Holy Father and Doctor, he said to Sister Mary Martha:

"I am there, I give a loving embrace and a favor to each of my Daughters."

Saint Jane Frances de Chantal, on her side, favored her very often with her maternal visits, giving her advice for her personal formation or valuable messages for our Mothers.

As to Saint Margaret Mary, the Great Lover of the Sacred Heart, she, doubtless, recognized in our humble Mary Martha a little younger Sister whose way, often hard, was not without similarity to her own. So, she came to bring her the help of her encouragement in trying moments.

She reminded her of the value of sufferings:

"If you knew the reward of suffering you could not prevent yourself from desiring it."

She incited her to the conquest of souls and inflamed her with love for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. One October 17, when our Sister was communicating:

"You receive all your Treasure," she murmured, *"you love Our Lord much!"*

From this contact, this intimacy, there resulted not only an admirable intensity of religious life in the soul of Sister Mary Martha, but also a perpetual renovation of **attachment to the Institute** where God had marked her place.

A number of times, in effect, the counsels of Saint Francis de Sales were of general importance to the Order. By means of the happy Privileged Soul, they reached all Visitandines. She could then feel herself a member, although a miserable one, of the immense Family to which the common Father truly addressed "the watchword" of a Founder.

"My daughter, you must pass over your own domain, which is the Holy Rule—I have had much trouble in preparing your holy Writings, going even into the least details; this is now my greatest glory.

"The first of your observances, is to study Jesus, not only in prayer, but in all things and everywhere; in time of labor as well as in your free moments.

"The task of the Visitandine on earth is the life of Our Lord at Nazareth. A life of simplicity and of holy childhood: the infancy of Jesus.—Your actions must be ordinary in the eyes of creatures, but extraordinary for Heaven by love.

"I have left an abundant nourishment to my Order; it depends upon the fidelity of each one to nourish herself with it.

"Blessed will those be, who will do violence to themselves to observe their Rules well: they will be my crown of glory! My mantle of honor is meekness and humility: by these marks I recognize my true daughters."

Our Lord Himself seemed to take pains to recall to her unceasingly and in multiplied ways, the teachings of the Holy Founder. In the school of the divine Master, Sister Mary Martha **understood better her personal mission,** which was to pray and suffer for all—which was also to aid souls at a distance, who were destined to enter the Salesian Sheepfold. These souls seemed to her, one day, to be like sheep vainly endeavoring, for want of a bridge, to pass over a dangerous precipice:

"I trust them to you," said the Sovereign Shepherd, *"you will urge them towards Me as if you were the shepherdess. These sheep are souls that I have chosen for Myself. In order to draw them to Me, your heart must remain very close to Mine."*

She understood better the necessity—for every Religious—of a very supernatural spirit and a perfect fidelity to the Rule.

"Your life is not of this world," Jesus taught her, *it is a heavenly life on earth. Since you do not belong to this world, you must not do worldly things.*

"My Spouses are like My Saints.—My Spouses should have their hearts in Heaven whilst they work for Me on earth. When you perform an action, an act of true observance, the heavenly Court looks upon you."

Shortly after her profession, even before a series of exceptional graces was opened to her, our dear Sister had received a very impressive view of the beauty of our holy Rules and the blessings attached to their observance. And since, how many divine lessons have been added!

One day Our Lord made her traverse the whole world. He showed her Religious, Priests, Bishops . . . and in each state a different measure of grace.

"I shall ask of each one according to what he has received," He said to her, *"but for you I shall ask you but one thing, namely, if you have obeyed well.*

"Your Rules and Constitutions are your way. This is a sure way, which will lead you straight to the Visitation in Heaven.

"You do not know in detail the perfection contained in your Holy Rule. If you are faithful to practice it in everything, in the most perfect manner, you shall always have new

lights to understand it. Each act of true observance obtains for you a new light that each negligence makes you lose, for the observance of the Rule gives an intelligence of heavenly things."

She understood the Spirit of the Visitation:

"My daughter," the Savior said to her, *"ask My Father for all Visitandines a union with Jesus in the hidden life."*

July 2, 1870, the whole Visitation of Heaven was presented to the humble Servant of God as a numerous and triumphant army. This legion of blessed souls was before Our Lord Jesus Christ contemplating His glorious Wounds:

"They are very near Me," said Jesus, *"because they have been well hidden on earth."*

"All the glory of your holy Order is for Heaven."

This was to give a glimpse of the eternal joys, and also of the road that will lead us to them.

This allusion to the hidden life which should be that of the Visitandine, Our Lord again recalled to Sister Mary Martha some months later.

On the night of December 13, 1870, a splendid standard was shown to her, on which sentences were engraved in golden letters, enriched with precious stones. Jesus caused His Servant to read the first three lines—there was but a single word:

Union! Union!! Union!!!

This word recalled the desire of our Holy Founders. They wished that we should live in a great union of hearts, for, *"Therein is the practice and spirit of your Holy Order."*

But the lower part of the banner surpassed all the rest in brilliancy. This, it was explained to our Sister, was a symbol to show that if souls that do great things for God are magnificently recompensed in Heaven, still more beautiful will be the crowns of those who shall have lived hidden in humility.

CHAPTER XXI

CHASTITY

"I choose Jesus, my Lord and my God, for the only object of my love."
(Custom Book of Visitation.)

A GREAT preoccupation of Sister Mary Martha, above all during her Retreats, was to find matter of accusation in the Holy Tribunal. In the candor of her perfect simplicity, she believed that she did not know how to make her confession. What was to be done except to implore the Sovereign Master of her soul?

"My Jesus, I should like to know how to make my confession as our Sisters do!

"My child, each one has her conscience, and it is not necessary to conform one's self to others," answered Our Lord. *"The faults of some are not those of others. As for you, you have no more knowledge of evil than the little child who has not yet the use of reason."*

This last word, the good Master repeated several times to His chosen one.

"We believe with certitude—writes the intimate confidante of all the struggles of Sister Mary Martha, as well as of the graces of the Savior towards her—that her soul has preserved intact the baptismal robe. One day, seeing her

in trouble in regard to confession, her conscience not reproaching her with anything in particular, we said to her:

"You must accuse yourself of the greatest sins of your life."

"I do not well know what they are, Mother, perhaps some little disobediences to my parents? . . . " (Very honored Mother Thérèse-Eugénie.)

The childhood of our Sister had, in effect, passed in the religious calm of the fields and under the vigilance of the maternal eye. And Our Lord Himself had taken care to remove all that could ever so little tarnish this virginal purity.

From Croix-Rouge, the villagers often descended to Chambéry with the fruits of their gardens or the excellent products of their farms. One day Madame Chambon confided Françoise to some young girls who were going to the market. What danger did she run? . . . We do not know exactly; but suddenly, seized with an instinctive fright, and guided, she believed, by Saint Joseph, the poor child ran home. Her Mother, seeing her so excited, never again sent her to the city.

Having entered the Monastery in a happy ignorance of evil, Sister Mary Martha remained a truly angelic soul. So, in this Chapter which is entitled "Chastity", there is, in reality, question of limpid innocence and virginal love.

"My Beloved is pleased in the midst of the lilies," says the Spouse of the Canticles.

Jesus, the Lily of the Valley, took pleasure in the virginal soul in which He met as it were a reflection of His divine purity . . .

"Blessed are the pure of heart because they shall see God—My dear child, I unite pure hearts to Mine!—Your souls and your bodies have been formed by My hand, you must respect them much: they shall enjoy together before Me."

The Angels forming a guard of honor around the Tabernacle, also made her understand how our fragile flesh was for God a subject of greater glory, when it is consecrated to His love.

The Holy Virgin came to complete these lessons and invitations. On a feast of the Visitation (1875) she presented herself in company with our Sisters of Heaven.

"I show them to you," she said to her child of predilection, *"see how happy they are in my suite . . . Some day you also will be there . . . Our Lord wishes that all in His Spouses should be pure, chaste, and holy . . . You must occupy your mind with heavenly things. You must present to Jesus an empty heart in order that He may fill it.*

VIRGINAL LOVE

"A chaste heart," said the Blessed Adeodat, "is one that loves God only."

One day, writes our Holy Mother de Chantal, Our Lord made me know after Holy Communion that if a soul wishes to belong entirely to Him, interiorly and exteriorly, she

has but to give herself to the practice of the Constitution of Chastity: (1)

"Its words are entirely divine," He said to me, *"there is nothing human, all has come forth from My Heart."*

Let us, now, listen to the illiterate Sister Mary Martha:

"One day, desirous of penetrating more deeply into the secret of the Spouse," relates her Spiritual Aid, "I tried to sound her adroitly:

"You know, my good Sister Mary Martha, that our Holy Founder wishes us to communicate charitably to one another, our little goods and ills: then speak to me of your childhood, of the mercies of God towards you . . . Is it not true that remembrance does much good?"

"Oh, yes! . . . The good God is all love. When I was a very little girl He made me feel it. He spoiled me so much! I knew nothing of the world, I knew only Him! Oh, how much I love Him!"

"But why, then, does Our Lord love you so much? What is there in you to attract Him?"

And she answered me with a sweet simplicity:

"Oh, my Sister, it is that I am ignorant; I have a simple and an open heart . . . and then I have a **detached heart:** *He is all! . . . I am attached to nothing, to nothing . . . I have need of nothing, I desire nothing;* **my heart is free."**

(1) There is no need of declaring how strictly the Sisters of this congregation are obliged to it. Be it said, in a few words, they ought to live, to breathe, to pant for their celestial Spouse in all honesty, purity, cleanness, and holiness, of mind, of words, of demeanor, and of actions, through an immaculate and angelic conversation. (Saint Francis de Sales: Constitution on Chastity.)

"I felt that all this was profoundly true. However, I resumed: "Your employment, you appear to love it well, and you are interested in it?"

"The garden? . . . Yes, because it is an obedience."

And your nephews? do they not occupy a little place in your heart? Do you not think of them sometimes?

"My nephews? Oh, not so much. I ask God that they may remain good Christians; apart from this I never think of them. There is no time to think of so many things, one is so happy with our little Jesus! He is sufficient, do you not find it so, my Sister?"

Do not the purity and the detachment of this soul appear here in all their clearness?

During the thanksgiving of a fervent Communion Sister Mary Martha heard Jesus exhort her to this perfect disengagement:

"You, My Spouse, must go high. He, Whom you receive does not belong here: look at Him." She saw our Lord in an immense light. He continued: *"I wish that your affections should be on high, far above the earth."*

Love is the gift of self. To love uniquely, to give one's self without reserve, *is the virginity of love.*

Jesus demands this virginity of love in the heart of His Spouses.

"To be a religious, My daughter, is to have banished from one's heart every created thing . . . It is to see everywhere only Jesus, your Spouse, it is to seek Him alone.

"The Spouse who will not do this will expose herself to suffer much . . . She will gain little and will be often in trouble."

One day, whilst the Community was reunited at the moment of the "Obedience", (1) the divine Master appeared suddenly above the place of the Superior, and addressing all in the person of the happy child who, alone, had the privilege of seeing Him and hearing Him, He said:

"You are all standing; what do you mean? Your end ought to be the **heart to heart union with Me.** *You all know it. But several are too much attached to things of time. They do not think that, I alone, I should be* **their All.**

"When I am sought ardently, I come to the soul that desires Me. You can abridge the time of trial by a greater hunger for Me."

This is a point to which Jesus returns very often:

"There is no Spouse like Me. I think of you constantly.— Always love Me! As for Me, I love you always! The love of your Spouse is eternal! . . .

"Be grateful . . . Be melted with love for Me, breathe only for Me. Likewise, I belong entirely to each one. I wish to be alone in your affections. You are all for Me. It is necessary that I also should be your All . . . It is a great thing to be **the All of God!**

"You must rise above yourselves in order to attain the heart to heart union with Me. I wish you to be Mine alone. I do not

(1) At the signal given by the bell, all the Religious range themselves around the Assembly Room and await **"standing"** the orders of the Superior.

wish that there should be a fiber of your hearts that is not all Mine! . . . I wish you to be without desires. I wish the earth to be nothing to you, nothing."

Under the efficacious unction of these words, Sister Mary Martha felt her heart bound in her breast:

"Ah," she exclaimed, inflamed with love, *"Ah, my beloved Jesus! I give Thee my heart and that of my Mothers . . . and of our Sisters . . . of all creatures, even of those who do not love Thee!"*

Hearts that loved not Him Whom she loved so much! At this thought, her soul was transpierced with sorrow:

"Ah, my Jesus, how is it that Thou hast created these hearts and that they do not love Thee? They know not how good Thou art!"

"Behold the flames that I give to My Spouses," answered the good Master. *"I accept your offering. My beloved, often offer Me your heart and those of all My creatures."*

Detachment, which with Sister Mary Martha was so perfect, had, at times, its slight weaknesses.

On one of those delightful days when Our Lord kept with her constantly and sensibly, the happy Privileged One was seized with a fancy to go and say a word to her Mistress. The jealousy of the heavenly Spouse was excited by it. He retained her by this loving reproach:

"Have you not enough in Me?" You must go on doing your actions before Me . . .

"I wish your hearts entirely, to make up to Me for the ingratitude of men."

Another day, as the thought of our Sister was somewhat taken up with the temporal affairs of her family:

"What, My daughter," her divine Master said to her, *"you thing of the affairs of your relatives, and you neglect Mine?"*

It is thus that Our Lord is jealous of the hearts of His Spouses. But Jesus Christ leaves not without recompense, the spirit of sacrifice and true disengagement of heart. For a long time Sister Mary Martha had not prayed for her relatives and she was troubled by it:

"My Jesus," she said, in her usual way, *"I am failing in my duty. I forgot my relatives."*

"And I," tenderly answered the Spouse, *"I think of them every day. In the same way that I give the hundredfold to the religious soul, as I have promised, I will give it to your parents."*

CHAPTER XXII

OBEDIENCE

"Blessed is the soul that renders its obedience prompt, pure, and perfect. I shall aid it to relate its victories to My Eternal Father."
IV Beatitude of the Daughters of Holy Mary.
(Saint Francis de Sales.)

"IT IS Obedience that makes the religious," asserts our Holy Mother Jane Frances de Chantal.

One can, in effect, keep virginity in the world; poverty may be practiced there in keeping the heart detached even in the midst of riches. This is relatively easy. But by the vow of obedience, the human soul immolates that which it renounces the least voluntarily, that which God has placed in her the most personal, the most noble, the highest: judgment and free will. Yes, this liberty of willing and acting is the most dear Isaac that the Religious must sacrifice to God, entirely and forever! The vow of obedience is an essential and characteristic base of the life that she has embraced.

Divinely instructed and generously docile, Sister Mary Martha was an obedient soul.

With a spirit of profound faith she truly recognized God in authority.

Authority, that is to say the Word incarnated anew, not sacramentally under the species of bread, but morally under human appearance, still to sustain our souls with the Divine Word.

"Who hears you, hears Me; who despises you, despises Me."

Has not this been the unchanged teaching of the Savior for twenty centuries? Doubtless there is no question here of the teaching power given to the Church; but we must see in it also the part of authority that God delegates to His representatives.

"My daughter, I am the Superior," Jesus will often repeat to His Spouse.

On several occasions, at the moment of the "Obedience," appearing at the place of the Superior, and, as it were, molded into the same person with her:

"Look," He said, *"look . . . It is I Who am in your Mother's place. It is I who listen to what they say to her . . . She holds My place and I hold hers. Her answers are Mine."*

Likewise, at Chapter, Our Lord sometimes took the Superior's place, or rather, the person of our Mother disappeared, becoming Jesus before the ravished eyes of the humble ecstatic.

Thus He came to make the changes of employments. At His side, were our Holy Founders, and by the mouth of our Mother, Jesus spoke:

"I come," He said on one of these occasions, *"because your Mother needs Me. She desires that I direct all. She has asked Me to do it. I come then in order to give the employ-*

ments, and to each one the grace of receiving well what obedience will decide. None of you should be disquieted: think only of Jesus, occupy yourself only with Jesus . . . and Jesus will do everything for you."

With such light illuminating her soul, one may conceive the attitude of Sister Mary Martha in approaching her Superiors. It is impossible to imagine more abasement, respect, veneration. It was felt that our Sister made herself little, becoming penetrated by her nothingness as if unworthy of approaching the Representatives of God.

One may equally conceive with what confidence she abandoned herself to their conduct, of what import to her were their least decisions. This thought: *"Our Mother has said it to me,"* cut short all self initiative. It was, also, always an efficacious remedy against the assaults of doubt or the insinuations of fear.

Her confidence in authority, which, united to the simplicity of a child, reached even "to work miracles", is witnessed by this fact noted in the manuscripts.

Our little Sister had been sick and in bed for some days. Our very honored Sister Marie-Alexis Blanc, her Mistress of Novices, going to see her spoke this word of encouragement to her: "Tomorrow you will be cured." Sister Mary Martha took the words literally . . . and this great faith ravished the Heart of Jesus. He restored perfect health to her on the very instant, saying:

"As a proof of your cure, I wish you to take your meal this evening as if you were with the Sisters in the Refectory."

Confidence and the spirit of faith were truly necessary to us, writes the Superior, that we should serve the Community dinner to a sick Sister who had drunk only water for several days. She ate all that was served to her. (1) That night she slept very quietly, rose on the next day for Mass, and resumed her employment and ordinary occupations. **(Manuscript.)**

This perfect confidence in the authority of the Superior was precisely one of the points on which the demon tried to trouble our Sister. By perfidious insinuations he often attempted to prevent her from having recourse to those who had grace to enlighten and sustain her in her way, sometimes so difficult.

It happened that for some days Sister Mary Martha felt an extreme repugnance to approach our very honored Mother. As one evening she was placing this pain at the feet of Jesus, she heard His voice:

"Look, My beloved, at this lamp that enlightens My Spouse . . . If you light it every day without adding oil to it, what will become of it? It would no longer give light."

Our Lord, developing the comparison afterwards, made His Servant understand that confidence is to the maternal torch as oil to the lamp: it permits it to furnish its light:

"If you separate yourself from the Superior, you will take a false route, and you will lose the true light."

"The Superior is the light, you must have recourse to it."

(1) Without drinking, adds our very honored Mother with a parenthesis, which shows the mortification of Sister Mary Martha: the infirmarian having forgotten to give her her drink.

"Superiors in order to be good, ought to give their children spiritual death: this is their whole task," taught the Divine Master at another time.

And Sister Mary Martha saw unfold before her, a road all inundated with light.

"In order to pass over it, your Superior must make you die to yourselves and to nature. Indocile souls that do not wish to be directed and corrected, do not enter there at all . . . they go by an obscure and dark path."

Our Sister assuredly followed this luminous way. We know that, seconding the designs of God, her Superiors furnished her many occasions of dying to nature. But whatever she received from the maternal lips: blame or encouragement, order or prohibition, never was she seen to depart from an entire submission, a profound humility.

Let us hear the testimony of her Spiritual Fathers and Superiors. They are unanimous in declaring that they could impose upon her no matter what work, ask of her no matter what sacrifice, without meeting with the least resistance. Never did she reply. Never did she dispute an order given.

Such is the affirmation of our holy Confessors, the Canons Bouvier and Collonge, who, each one, had for more than twenty years the direction of her conscience: *"She was very obedient,"* both have declared, *"and followed literally the advice that was given her.*

"Obedience is all, for her," we read also in the declarations of our very honored Mother Thérèse-Eugénie Revel. We have seen her obey both the orders of her Superiors and the divine requirements with a true *fidelity.*

This is also the testimony of the last Superiors of Sister Mary Martha. They recognized that the word "obedience" was all-powerful over her. It alone had the power to draw her from her long and profound contemplations at the feet of her divine Master. As soon as our Mother had spoken, or no matter which one of us in her name, our Sister rose promptly to go to the place designated. (1)

Had not Our Lord said to her:

"My grace is attached to promptitude of obedience?"

Religious obedience does not consist only in submission to orders, counsels, and immediate desires of Superiors. There are, in the course of the day and of life, a number of directions established by the Holy Founders and approved by the Church to which the Religious ought to subject themselves in order to remain faithful to God.

"The truly obedient soul," writes Saint Francis de Sales, *"loves her Rules and honors them as the true way for the union of her soul with God, and therefore never wanders from them."* (2)

Sister Mary Martha, as every true Religious, had the *"soul"* of obedience, that is to say the love of the obedience vowed to God in the person of her Superiors. She had not to a less degree the love of the Rules and Constitutions, of which in the supernatural light received she felt the importance and the beauty.

(1) A good old Sister, some little—oh, holily so! jealous of the divine favors of her companion, took it upon herself one day to shake her, as was sometimes done by direction of the Superior, in order to awaken her from her mystical sleep. Sister Mary Martha opened her eyes and said gently: **"Have you permission?"**

(2) Conference XI. (Of the virtue of Obedience.)

Already several times in the course of our recital the regret of our Sister has appeared in regard to these blessed Rules, which she fears or deplores not to observe well.

One point above all preoccupied her: that of exactitude to the assemblies of the Community from which her employment with our pupils kept her habitually separated. We know, that during the vacations she made up for it with an inexpressible consolation. She came with joy having the words of the psalmist on her lips: "How good and sweet it is, for brethren to dwell together in charity."

Beyond these exceptions imposed by duty, Sister Mary Martha was very exact to observe all that she could of our holy prescriptions.

The rule of silence, in particular, she had much at heart. Her companions remember with edification how rigorously, above all in Lent, she observed it.

In what concerned modesty and religious gravity, we know her profoundly recollected attitude, her eyes always down when they were not closed.

As to our Spiritual Directory, it was infinitely precious to her, and we can say that she practiced it in its perfection, since her orientation towards God was constant.

The text placed at the head of this little book she knew not how to **read;** but she lived it, and many times it returned to her lips as a formula specially dear to her soul. (1)

(1) "Let their whole life and all their actions tend to unite them to God, to procure by their prayers and good example support to the Church and salvation to their neighbor, and therefore, let their chief desire be to abound in virtue, that their good odor may in pleasing God overspread the hearts of the faithful."

(Spiritual Directory, Article 1.)

CHAPTER XXIII

POVERTY

> "Lord Jesus, show me the ways of Thy most dear Poverty, for I love it so passionately that I cannot find rest far from it.
>
> Thou knowest it, Oh my God, since it is Thou who hast put this great love in my heart!"
>
> (Saint Francis Assisi.)

NO WORDS could translate better the sentiments of our former Tertiary of Saint Francis Assisi; evangelical poverty was really the favorite virue of Sister Mary Martha, and—as well as humility—the holy passion of her soul.

Doubtless her entrance into the Convent did not cost her a great material sacrifice: born of a family of very moderate means, she did not have to renounce wealth, with its cortège of luxury and comfort; and certain privations, so trying for other novices who were brought up under different conditions, were not a great suffering to her. It remains not the less true that she acquired in the cloister the true spirit of poverty, and that she practiced this virtue in a heroic manner, in all its extent, and under the most varied forms. Here, as elsewhere, the example of Our Lord had the first place in her formation.

We remember the lights that came to her during the first years of her religious life, on the excellence and beauty of the vow of poverty, by the image of **Jesus newly born:** *"Never did a child appear in this world in a greater poverty."* She saw the Divine Infant enveloped in His swaddling clothes, having nothing to warm Him but the arms of His Mother and the breath of the animals . . . Destitution, sufferings, privations, humiliations of the Savior and of His Holy Mother, you are a sermon for His Spouses!

One day Sister Mary Martha was making the Stations of the Cross. At the tenth station, Our Lord made her understand the graces merited by His despoilment in favor of souls called to follow Him in Poverty. And He asked her to offer the Holy Wounds *"for those of His Spouses who have need of despoilment, in order that they may know how 'to clothe' Him by a more careful practice of their vow of Poverty."*

The divine Crucified continuing to instruct His faithful disciple, presented her, in this austere virtue, the sacrificial knife with which not only to cut attachments to exterior and sensible objects, but also to penetrate pitilessly into the most intimate depths of the soul in order to despoil it of all things:

"It is truly only religious souls who can participate in My despoilment on the Cross in all its extent, by allowing themselves to be despoiled by the pain of the moment, as God wills."

From **Jesus in the Tabernacle,** the same lesson, the same appeal:

"Look at Him Who is there, how poor He is! . . . and conform yourself to this Model. A heart cannot possess Me

fully except when it is entirely stripped of self and of creatures. In this poverty are all riches.

"In the Tabernacle, My daughter, the same as on the Cross, I am despoiled of all . . . I wish that the religious soul be thus, also: she ought to lose her own spirit and take that of Jesus.

"In order to gain My Heart, she must be poor, have only what is necessary. Superfluity belongs to Me, it must be given to Me."

It may well be supposed that Sister Mary Martha had never what was superfluous, and always restricted herself to the bare necessaries.

Poor she was, *effectively,* in all things. She was so in her worn out clothes, patched even to extremity.

She was so in her food, taking for herself, with permission, what others refused, fruit entirely spoiled, that she alone could eat.

She was so in her employment, taking extreme care to save everything, having broken hardly anything in her charge of Refectorian in the Boarding School, where occasions of waste were, however, frequent; the most fragile objects were preserved indefinitely in her hands almost without any injury. (Manuscript.) She was so in her good use of time, as this is one of the requirements of religious poverty. Sister Mary Martha was naturally very active and it is very remarkable that the most signal graces, the most profound recollection, never interfered with her work. "She succeeded very quickly with her work," say all of her companions, and there was not one who could get out of

a difficulty as she could. "It is clear and proved," deposes the very honored Mother Thérèse-Eugénie Revel, "that she daily did the work of two persons."

Doubtless, God gave her strength, but He also gave her the understanding of the vow and the virtue of Poverty, with the conviction that she had not the right to lose a particle of her time.

"My child," Jesus had said to her, *"you must not lose time. All your minutes belong to Me; if you lose them it is a theft that you make from Me and from the neighbor.—I wish that you should ask with great humility for what you will have to do, as a poor woman who considers herself obliged when people wish to give her work.—I wish you to serve the neighbor, the pupils as well as the Sisters, without ever refusing work, but in regarding yourself much honored that they are pleased to make use of you.*

It was equally through a spirit of poverty that the dear Domestic Sister collected the fruits and vegetables with so much care, watching that nothing should be lost. Through a spirit of poverty she picked up one by one the grapes that fell to the ground during the vintage . . . And we never fail, when the season returns, to recall the memory of Sister Mary Martha acquitting herself carefully of this work. Through a spirit of poverty she added to the garden herbs the wild sorrel found in the prairie . . . and in the midst of winter found means of unearthing even from under the snow, fresh vegetables that she carried as a treasure to the Sister cook.

She understood that the goods of the Monastery were the goods of God; she cared for them as such and suffered when she perceived any negligence on this point.

"Sister Mary Martha hardly gave any lessons," said one of her companions, whose testimony we have cited several times; "she was so humble! she noticed only failings in poverty."

This great spirit of poverty was not always understood by the young Sisters. She was sometimes accused of avarice and of thinking only of the material. A touching thing, and one which shows us what sincere humility accompanied her spirit of poverty, these reproaches often cast her into great pain, *"for,"* she said, *"it must be very true since my neighbor says it."*

Towards the end of her life she again confided this "thorn" to her Spiritual Aid: *"Some of our Sisters say that I am attached to the cabbages and spinach . . . Oh! no, only it pains me when I see these things lost, because they are the property of the Good God, it is He Who gives them to us . . . And then, we have made the vow of Poverty!"*

Did our good Sister sometimes go beyond the mark? This certainly would not be surprising. That is why, fastidious as we are, we sometimes taxed with exaggeration her zeal in wishing others to practice a poverty that was too austere! But also, having smilingly recalled these remembrances—and feeling sure our charitable Sister smiles upon us in Heaven—it is very sweet to us to reread in the Manuscripts this most consoling word of the Divine Master Who, Himself, knew the heart of His Servant:

"My daughter, they think you very avaricious because of the great attention you give to gather the smallest fruits and to take care of everything. I judge you very differently. I know how much your heart is detached from earthly things!" Behold the real truth.

Yes, poor, our Sister was by this detachment from everything created, by this interior, absolute despoilment . . . She was really despoiled, truly detached, free from every impediment, and very near this supereminent degree where poverty and chastity unite in a fraternal kiss, in such manner that, poor in all, the soul is rich in God alone. We recall the candid reply noted elsewhere:

"I have a disengaged heart . . . He is all. I cling to nothing, to nothing, I desire nothing . . . my heart is free."

CHAPTER XXIV

THE CHARITY OF SISTER MARY MARTHA

I. HER LOVE FOR GOD

> "Thou shalt love the Lord Thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind.
> This is the greatest and the first Commandment.
> (St. Matt. xxxvii.)

SISTER MARY MARTHA "clung to nothing", her heart "was free". The love of God absorbed her entirely; disengaged from the created, nothing hindered or paralyzed her enthusiasm.

The calls of Jesus Crucified, the intimacies of the Holy Communion, the ardent communications of the Holy Spirit, had enkindled and kept alive in her soul a fire of love. So, although entirely gratuitous, the marvelous tissue of graces of which her life was composed found in her an admirable correspondence with the divine preventions,—a correspondence that invited new graces, so that each day Charity increased in our Sister under all its forms: the tender and confiding love of a child, the pure and chaste love of the virgin, the exclusive love of the spouse, the ardent and strong love of Calvary . . .

We find in the richest period of her existence, the trace of these divine assaults which burn, in a certain manner the body as well as the soul:

"I wish My Heart to burn yours. I need it, and you need it because I wish to communicate Myself through you to My creatures."

It seems that afterwards and even to the last day, this interior fire is exhaled by preference in an intercessory prayer ascending towards Heaven as an incense of love—a prayer that interprets the whole soul of Sister Mary Martha, relieves her need of love and of reparation, at the same time that it makes numerous conquests for God. And, however, the humble nun remains ignorant of herself, so consumed by love that it prevents the least attention to the ineffable operations of the Savior in her, and to a transformation that attains a sort of identity with the Spouse.

Her spiritual Aid interrogated her one day:

"Sister Mary Martha, does it not fatigue you to remain kneeling all the morning and fasting?"

"One does not know, or think of these things."

"Doubtless you are very tired afterwards?"

"Oh, no! I hardly know well where I am."

You must say many things to the little Jesus during all this time?"

"Oh, no! we love each other."

"Love each other!" Behold the supreme word of the Lovers! . . . And so artlessly expressed by a simple country girl,

the sole conquest, the sole ambition, the sole triumph of Jesus! *"Love each other!"* All that Our Lord demands of Sister Mary Martha: labor, prayer, suffering, apostolate; all that He gives her: trials or graces . . . all this is only an efflorescence of love and has but one end: to sustain, to manifest, to prove a mutual love . . . *"Love each other."*

We may say that this mutual love of the Savior and of His chosen one has been apparent on each page of this volume in the teachings of the Master and in the acts of His disciple. And if among the lessons of Jesus some are particularly touching, they are surely those of divine love: is He not the Master of it by excellence?

"To love, this is the life in Heaven which is destined for you," He said to His Privileged One. *"You should live this life now, as much as you can."*

"You should live it." This was to make it understood that His Spouses have less need of speculative knowledge than persons who are destined by their state to direct and teach. For them the essential is the **practical science** of love by union and good works.

"The sole necessity is to possess God."

"If you wish to learn to know Me, I will teach you," said Jesus to her. *"Follow Me everywhere, I alone can instruct you."*

In showing the Wound of His Sacred Heart, the good Master added:

"Come, My child, come cast yourself within It. In giving the heart to God, the soul receives lights and graces in order to love, such as no book can give."

"I will teach you to love Me, for you do not know how to do so: the science of love is given to the soul that looks at the divine Crucified and speaks to Him heart to heart."

"My daughter," again said the Savior, *"in order to attain Him Whom you desire to find, you must enter into the interior of your heart; there, you can think of Me and I will think of you. The secret of My love is revealed to the soul that unites itself to Me and entertains itself with Me in the depths of its heart."*

And what is this secret? The Spouse gives Himself only to the soul for whom He is reserved.

"My daughter, I have thousands of favored souls. I am unique for each one. It is a secret of love which will remain solely between The Spouse and the Bride during eternity."

Under the impulse of the desires of the Beloved, Sister Mary Martha asked Him one day, that all the Sisters of the Community might know well how to entertain themselves with Him heart to heart: *"Ah,"* answered Jesus with an expression of ardent tenderness, *"what pleasure this gives Me! because it is for Me! . . . Those whose hearts are united with Me are My delight. I am indemnified for the ingratitude of men."*

No matter how bold and confiding pure love may be, it nevertheless remains submissive here below to the laws of a chaste fear: the dust of earth may so easily tarnish the most beautiful crystal! The divine Master reassures His Spouse. Jesus once showed Sister Mary Martha the place that he destined for her in Heaven. She immediately humbled herself interiorly and interrogated with some anxiety:

"Good Master, is there anything in me which would prevent me from going there?"

"This is not wanting," Our Lord sweetly replied, *"but love effaces all."*

How many times did not Jesus repeat to her this consoling word, which expresses so well the action of perfect contrition in souls: "Love effaces all."

One day feeling an ardent desire of uniting herself to Him, our Sister supplicated the Savior to withdraw her to His Paradise. Jesus seemed not to hear her . . . Then she exclaimed:

"Oh, my Jesus, here, one is always exposed to offending Thee!" . . .

"My daughter, love effaces all."

And as with insistance she still asked her good Master to grant her at least the grace of never more offending Him, He answered:

"When you come to Me with love, I no longer regard your faults. I regard only your love. Love effaces all."

Another day Sister Mary Martha dared not approach the Holy Table, at the remembrance of some infidelity. Our Lord reassured her by these very words:

"Love purifies all."

"Good Master, is it only today that I shall be purified?"

"No, My daughter, the soul is purified every time that it loves with a strong love. But it must be a true love, pure, and disengaged from everything.

"The Spouse who loves can act freely. I take care of purifying her soul in measure as she works in My love.

"My union with you is your only wealth: there your advancement is made and no one can prevent it.

"You must be like the thorn on the branch to which it is attached."

We know how much the dear Sister advanced in this blessed union.

Sister Mary Martha was making her Stations of the Cross. Having reached the fifth and sixth stations, she saw bruised and bloody arms place themselves by the side of her own, which she was holding extended. And Jesus said to her:

"Behold, My daughter, how My arms are your arms."

This was to express to her in a sensible manner the unification to which, under so many forms, He invited her:

"I have need only of your heart," He loved to repeat while showing her His open Heart: *"You have need only of Mine. Repose on My Heart: the place of the Beloved is on the Heart of her Spouse. You are there for time and eternity.*

When unifying love thus fills a soul, all weaknesses vanish before it, and it is—we constantly understand it better—the secret of the heroic generosity of Sister Mary Martha. Notwithstanding all that the divine Master places of goodness, tenderness, ineffable condescension, in His conduct towards her, it pleased Him to make her pass through extremely painful states. The requirements sometimes reached a degree which disconcerts us. And

these demands addressed at first to a young Religious of twenty-five years were to mark with more or less intensity her whole existence. In 1887 the very honored Mother Thérèse-Eugénie Revel again will note:

"Our Lord says constantly to His faithful Spouse: *'My daughter, ascend Calvary with Me.'* He wills that, in spite of her great habitual sufferings, she must always go on without asking repose. He declared it to her one day in a vigorous manner:

'I wish you to be a ready victim.'"

Ready, thanks to the strength of divine charity.

II. CHARITY TOWARDS THE NEIGHBOR

"And the second is like to this: thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."
(St. Matt. xxii, 39.)

"Divine Charity entering into a heart, draws after it all the train of virtues," writes the holy Bishop of Geneva. Among all, the love of the neighbor is the infallible mark of the love that the creature bears to God:

"All may know that you are My disciples if you love one another as I have loved you."

Sister Mary Martha loved God sovereignly. This love was poured upon creatures under the form of fraternal charity and an entire devotedness. It may be said that under the direction of Jesus and in union with Him she gave to the neighbor her time, her heart, her life. How-

ever, it must be remarked, that there again her virtue sometimes remained veiled to the profit of humility. Our Sister did not possess certain advantages that would naturally attract sympathy, and for our human sensibilities double the price of the least services, kindness, or amiabilities. God had not given her charms of countenance, of appearance, or of voice, any more than grace and elegance of manner and movement. Intercourse with her was not pleasing, and her charity, not well expressed by exterior demonstrations, was not always appreciated at its just value.

On the other hand her multiplied labors led her from time to time, to ask help from some of her companions who were already sufficiently occupied; this was considered a failure in discretion or propriety, and she was reproached for it. She was always ready with an answer—her answer—to all.

"Why, Sister Mary Martha, are you constantly asking help from first one then the other?" interrogated a Sister. "Do you not understand that this is disagreeable when one is already overburdened?"

"Sister, the young must be taught to devote themselves . . . Charity! you see, there is nothing greater."

The questioner said nothing; she believed in a very different reason; she thought that Sister Mary Martha, charmed with mortification and humiliation, acted thus in order to gain a reproof for herself. And we readily believe that she was not mistaken. It seems that Our Lord was sometimes pleased, in order to humble His Spouse, to make her seek unnecessary help. One day the avowal of it escaped our Sister. She went to the fruit store-room to

ask the help of a companion to carry a little heater to the Refectory.

"Oh, poor Sister, instead of coming here could you not have managed to carry it yourself," the very busy Sister could not help saying to her.

"True, my Sister, but **He wishes it this way."**

"But, how is it that you always know where we are?" asked the workers, not without some impatience.

"My good Angel brought me here," she answered simply.

As to the service asked for, it was always very short, she never took advantage: after two or three minutes, she would send the Sister away assuring her that she could finish alone.

For the rest, let us hasten to add that she willingly rendered service to the neighbor. Our Lord had particularly asked her for this practice of Charity:

"Never regard yourself . . . never refuse a service.

This was so well known that one of our Sister cooks, in her playful psychology, had found an infallible means of keeping the aids that Sister Mary Martha came to take away from her. When she saw her coming, she would say to a postulant or novice:

"Little one, come quickly and help me, I am very late. Oh, Sister," she objected, *"if you knew, how we are pressed ourselves, you would give us a hand."*

Immediately, without saying a word, our Sister would sit down and prepare the vegetables, string the beans; there was no further question of her own work. The ruse

had always full success—always full success because the good heart of Sister Mary Martha and her love for God would not permit her to refuse a service to the neighbor.

And when her usual work offered her some relaxation, we already know with what haste she put herself at the disposal of others. During the vacations of the School, the Sister who had charge of the cellar and was not very strong, was touched to see the charitable Sister wait for her every day at the quarter hour before the meals to carry the things to the Community refectory.

This kindness was only one of the forms of charity drawn from the Heart of Jesus, and was, therefore, profoundly supernatural.

"I am all Charity; it is I Who work in the one who practices charity. Those who are Mine ought to have great charity towards the neighbor . . . an unlimited love, but a love supernatural and disengaged."

"Supernatural", Sister Mary Martha made no distinction of persons. She loved all of her Sisters equally and, following the recommendation of her good Master, "carried them all in her heart."

We have remarked how much she was interested in each one among us, how much she prayed for each one. She felt herself continually urged to this:

"You must love your neighbor very much," the heavenly voices said to her, *"and do for him what you would not have had the courage to do for yourself. The neighbor must feel in you a good heart, the Heart of God."*

What support to the neighbor! What true goodness! What compassion for every weakness, every trouble, every suffering . . . And what facility in forgetting offences!

"I do not remember," deposes one of her companions, "that Sister Mary Martha ever said a wounding word to me, nor to our Sisters. I have often refused her slight services, she would return to ask me at another time with the same simplicity. This is a characteristic trait of her humble charity."

Never did our dear Sister impute evil to the failings of the neighbor in her regard. In reading the manuscripts not a single allusion can be found to so many little vexations of which she was the object. One might with impunity have difficulties with her, for it was always she who accused herself first.

One day Jesus showed Sister Mary Martha His Head crowned with thorns.

"Amongst My Saints," He said to her, *"there are some who have contributed to give Me these Wounds and, however, I love them and treat them as friends . . .*

"My daughter, with the neighbor, after My example, a great goodness is necessary in order to forget all offenses, thinking only to pardon and to give new benefits. This is the practice of childlike souls in whom I take pleasure."

"When, after having failed in humility and patience towards this holy Sister, I asked her pardon," relates again one of her companions, "I felt that she pardoned with all her heart."

As to her own faults, we have seen (1) with what frankness she knew how to repair them, and how, by this means, she always kept her heart in sweet and peaceable harmony with her companions.

All this denotes—with the spirit of abnegation and humility—a profound love of the neighbor. A very supernatural love, have we said, but at the same time, the impulse of a heart naturally good. So, under a rude exterior, one has no trouble in believing that Sister Mary Martha may have suffered from her own rusticity. She would have found joy—she, who was so deeply affectionate—in being more amiable and more loved. But the jealous love of her Spouse did not permit it.

He said to her one day at Holy Communion:

"Come, My daughter, I wish to give you the two virtues of My Heart: sweetness and humility. With them you may indemnify My adorable Heart! Notwithstanding this, I shall allow you from time to time to fall into some faults before others in order to keep you hidden."

Another time Jesus made her the same promise accompanied with the same reserve:

"I will grant you the virtues of My Heart, meek and humble; but they will appear only to Me. As to you, My daughter, you will keep the apparent defects in order to maintain yourself hidden and humble.

Encouraging words for all souls.

(1) Chapter on Humility.

In what regards the Privileged Soul with whom we are occupied, do we not know the intention of Our Lord? To preserve her from every touch of pride, and by this to reassure the guides of her soul.

"All this should prove to your Superiors that what passes in you comes from God, for of yourself you are very wicked and very imperfect."

Very ignorant, also, could He have added . . . And we understand that Jesus sheltered His "violet" in the shadow of humility and abjection, and surrounded His "lily" with thorns, in order that the creature might not approach too near.

CHAPTER XXV

APOSTOLIC ZEAL

"This is a lover of his brethren and of the people of Israel: this is he that prayeth much for the people and for all the holy City."
(Macch. II, 14, 15.)

SOMETHING that particularly strikes those who are intimate with Sister Mary Martha and that cannot have escaped the reader, is—with the supernatural disseminated on each page of this admirable existence—the spirit of the apostolate that animates and sustains her. There was nothing narrow in the piety of our Sister, nothing egotistical in her prayers. She felt herself a member of the mystical body of Jesus Christ from which she never separated herself. Her apostolate was not limited to identifying herself with her Community and her Institute: she made herself one with the entire Church.

In investing her with a Mission of universal prayer, Our Lord gave to His humble Spouse lights that she reduced to practice in a manner as simple as sublime: she *immolated* herself in union with her Mater, she *prayed* in union with her Master, concentrating all her intercessory prayer in an assiduous offering of the merits of the Savior. Of such we have already had a glimpse in the chapters concerning the Holy Wounds. There remains only to consider her more closely in this work of immolation and of prayer from which nothing is excluded.

I

THE POPE AND THE CHURCH—BISHOPS AND PRIESTS

By her daily offering (1) all the life of Sister Mary Martha was vowed to the great cause of God; the cause of the Church, the Pastors, and the Faithful. Our Lord often renewed to His Servant the promise of the triumph of the Holy Church by the power of His Wounds and of the Immaculate Virgin:

"My daughter, you must perform well your charge, which is to offer My divine Wounds to My Eternal Father, because from this is to come the triumph of My Church, which will pass through the hands of My Immaculate Mother."

But, from the beginning, the divine Master forsaw every illusion and all equivocation. There could not be question of a material, visible, universal triumph of which certain souls dream! . . . Under the bark of Peter, never will the waves move with a perfect docility; sometimes, even, one may tremble before the fury of their agitation . . . To struggle, to struggle always, is a law of the life of the Church:

"We do not know what we ask for when we demand its triumph . . . My Church will never have a visible triumph!" (2)

However, through struggles and anguish, the work of Our Lord Jesus Christ continues to be accomplished in the Church and by the Church—the salvation of the world.

(1) Cf. Chap. VIII.
(2) And definitive, before the end of the world.

The work of Our Lord Jesus Christ is accomplished the better, as prayer—which has its place in the divine plan—implores with more insistence, the help of Heaven.

And it may be conceived that Heaven allows itself to be particularly moved when invoked in the Name of the redeeming Wounds. Jesus frequently insists on this point:

"You must draw unceasingly from these Sources for the triumph of My Church."

In a particularly troubled period, Sister Mary Martha earnestly asked Our Lord to cover the Sovereign Pontiff with the protection of His Holy Wounds. This prayer was agreeable to the Savior, He allowed our Sister to see that grace superabounded over the Most Holy Father, Pius IX, and that the prayers made by the Community contributed greatly to this:

"From My Wounds there goes forth for him a particular grace."

On another day when she prayed for the Church and the conversion of its enemies, Jesus said to her:

"How agreeable this prayer is to Me! All who are truly Mine ask the conversion of the enemies of My Church."

The most Holy Virgin spoke in the same manner in recommending to her child to pray for the great interests of the Papacy, and for the august Pontiff of Rome. October 6, 1867, (Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary) this good Mother said to her:

"I am going to teach you an invocation and you will give me great pleasure in saying it for the needs of the Holy

Church: 'Our Lady of the Rosary, protect the Holy Father . . . Our Lady of the Rosary, convert the enemies of the Church and of the Holy Father.'"

On each day of this month the happy Sister received the visit of the Queen of Heaven, who showed her how many graces flowed over the world through the Holy Wounds of Jesus and her maternal intercession.

From 1867 to the death of Pius IX, but notably during the period of the Vatican Council, it is astonishing to see to what an extent the life of Sister Mary Martha was associated with that of the Church. Our humble Domestic Sister followed, so to say, at a distance, the great event of which Rome was then suffering the consequences. She shared the anguish of the Holy Father. She multiplied, at the demand of Our Lord, penances and prayers. She learned from her Master that "His Holiness" should be maintained in the Chair of Peter, but in tribulations.

April 26, 1869, during the invocations to the Holy Wounds that the Community made daily for the needs of the Church, Jesus Crucified appeared to His Spouse. The divine Blood flowed in great abundance from His Sacred Wounds:

"Behold for My Vicar, Pius IX," He said.

And the Blood of the Savior continuing to flow, He added:

"Behold for My Ministers! for all, even for those who do not ask Me for light. Satan is about to bring the most furious assaults in order to annihilate the Church. Several luminaries

will lose the light, and many of those who appear to be columns will fall."

At the beginning of December, 1869, Our Lord again declares.

"My daughter, you must pray for the Council! . . . You must redouble your fervor, for it is by it that light is to be given."

At this time the cilice that our dear Sister wore day and night became sometimes so painful that it caused her extreme suffering. Jesus permitted this increase of suffering because the needs of the moment required the most heroic sacrifice.

In March, 1870, the divine Master announced:

"The Fathers of the Council know not when it will finish . . . No one can foresee it . . ."

Sister Mary Martha never separated from the Holy Father, the Bishops, his co-laborers and brethren in Jesus Christ. And among the Bishops, the one of the diocese became the very particular object of her filial solicitude. She felt bound to grant to him more than to any other; Our Lord made this a duty for her.

It would be curious to follow her in this respect. May we be permitted simply to note a true *religious command* fixed by the Sovereign Pastor with regard to one of our venerated Pontiffs.

"I wish," He said, *"that this soul should shine as a star in Heaven. I shall withdraw him from this world only when, by your prayers and your sufferings, above all by your invo-*

cations to the Holy Wounds, you shall have obtained for him this shining beauty!"

Some days after the Blessed Virgin added:

"Being an Archbishop, the perfection of this soul should be finished. Being 'your' Archbishop, the Community should be specially interested in him. Prayers, Communions, and sufferings, are necessary. You must cover him with the palms that he should carry to Heaven."

In union with the Episcopate, all of the clergy, secular and regular, benefited by this apostolate that Jesus, the Eternal Priest, asked of His Spouse. To keep her fervent in these immolations, Our Lord enlightened her exceedingly on the sublimity of the functions of the priest, the grandeur of his ministry, the dangers and the difficulties that await him, the necessity of a greater perfection, and, therefore, of more powerful helps:

"Priests and religious have received a great honor from God by their vocation. They should render glory to God for it in sanctifying themselves and in aiding in the sanctification of others. If he who teaches others does not practice what he teaches, he is much more guilty, and besides he suffers more in Purgatory."

On the other hand the recompense is equally incomparable. On the evening of the Feast of All Souls (November 2, 1869,) Sister Mary Martha saw pass before her a marvelous procession of souls ascending to Heaven . . . She could contemplate them, but not approach them . . . Two separated from this long line and came to her. They were the souls of two Priests! Their beauty defied all human conception . . . They said to her:

"We have found true happiness, true glory, true riches."

The celestial Director made His pupil understand the grandeur of the divine power granted to the successors of the Apostles to remit sins in His Name and by virtue of His Precious Blood. Our Sister saw It fall upon her at the moment of the absolution:

"I am watering My flower garden," the Savior once said to her.

In a vision that filled her with joy, the Virgin Mary appeared to her as the powerful Protectrice and the special Guardian of consecrated souls. Sister Mary Martha was transported to a place dazzling with light and whiteness:

"My daughter," said the Immaculate Virgin, *"this place is my domain, my habitation."*

Under the feet of Mary there was moving a frightful monster from whose jaws came out a thousand sharp and cutting instruments. A voice said:

"This is for priests and religious."

The good Sister did not at first understand the signification of what she saw. The next day Jesus explained to her that these horrible instruments *"represented the various temptations by which the demon seeks to wound and deceive consecrated souls, to make them fall."*

May these souls address themselves to Mary! Her virginal foot always crushes the head of the serpent.

All this deeply impressed our Sister. It is useless to add that in this worship of veneration, and in all her intentions the first rank was given to the Confessors and Chaplains of the Community. This was notably the case for Canon

Bouvier (1852-1885), and Canon Collonge (1885-1918). Their ministry, their health, their eternal salvation: she was interested in all their affairs. She was a stranger to nothing concerning them. And if we may believe the Manuscripts, she seems, indeed, to have transmitted to them more than one divine message.

II

SOULS—SINNERS—THE DYING

Our Lord had taught Sister Mary Martha that *"the true triumph of the Church is in souls."*

In order to respond to this divine lesson He wished that this humble cloistered soul should have a heart as vast as the world, and that in this heart there should burn an apostolic ardor:

"Come," He said to her, *"come to the conquest of souls!" "Come gather souls with Me! We shall go everywhere together!"*

Sometimes it seemed to her that being introduced into the burning Heart of Jesus, He carried her away to traverse all the regions of the globe in order to *gather souls* with Him.

It was in this labor that the dear missionary passed a part of her night, happy when, all at her expense, the "harvest" was rich. Giving an account one day to her Superior:

"I passed my night," she said, *"in gathering souls with the power that God has given me through the Holy Wounds of my good Master."*

It appeared to her then that she harvested souls as she would have collected fruit—in abundance.

Admirable apostolate of perpetual intercession that Jesus demanded principally in **favor of sinners and of the souls in Purgatory!**

"The great misery of the age," He confided to His Elect One, *"is that there are too few souls that are saved! You should pray unceasingly for sinners.*

"It belongs principally to religious souls to convert sinners by their prayers, their immolations, and the practice of their Rule."

The Visitation of Chambéry had responded to the desires of the divine Master in adopting the devotion of the Chaplet of Mercy. Our Lord did not, however, cease His appeals. He became more and more pressing in presenting His Wounds as a source of grace for sinners.

"I have desired for a very long time to see you distribute the fruits of My Redemption. At each word that you pronounce of the Chaplet of Mercy I let a drop of My Blood fall on the soul of a sinner. Every time that you efface the sins of men with My Holy Wounds you do more than Veronica. What she removed from My Face was light, but sins are very heavy!"

And addressing Himself specially to His chosen Spouse:

"Do you wish that I should shed My Blood on sinners; they who abuse It and trample It under foot? Do you wish to offer It to My Father for them?"

Then letting her see the multitude of sinners throughout the world:

"I show them to you that you may not lose any time."

One day these souls appeared to her as if buried in the mud. The Immaculate Virgin looked at them with a maternal and compassionate eye:

"This one is good, this is dear," she said to her humble child, *"carry them to My Son at the foot of His throne."* And there, Sister Mary Martha saw them, sprinkled with the Blood of Our Lord, suddenly clothed in great beauty.

What saddens Jesus most, and most provokes His anger, is the violation of the Sunday repose.

One Saturday, Sister Mary Martha was visiting our humble cemetery, reciting at each grave a "Requiem" and her dear invocations to the Holy Wounds, when she suddenly heard the complaints of the divine Master:

"My daughter, there are some Christians who are preparing to work tomorrow . . . tell your Superior to make reparation to Me for this."

The next day, Sunday, as she was about to return to the garden, the Savior said to her:

"Raise your eyes and look."

She looked and perceived in the fields surrounding the Monastery a great number of persons occupied with their labors:

"Behold, my daughter, what draws down the chastisements of God."

To complaints, threats were sometimes added:

"When, on the Day of Judgment, men shall see all that I have done for them during My life on earth; when they shall see My labors, My sufferings, My love, they will be very sorry not to have profited better!"

Or rather it was a striking view of the Justice of God irritated by the sins of the world. In an inexpressible suffering, feeling as if the weight of divine Justice and the sins of men bore heavily upon her, in desperation she exclaimed whilst humbling herself:

"My God, regard not our misery, but regard Thy Mercy!"

And she recommenced the invocations to the Holy Wounds, which appeased the Justice of God.

"Offer them to Me often in order to gain sinners for Me, for I hunger for souls."

When Paschal Retreats and Missions were given in the parish Church of Lémenc or in other parishes of the diocese, our Sister had to redouble her prayers and immolations: it was necessary to second the work of the Missionaries, and to prepare the ways for divine grace; it was necessary to supply for insufficiencies!

"My Mother and I will tread the wine press," said Jesus, *"some will be found who have labored much and who shall have nothing.—There are souls who receive life and others that remain on the earth; it is for you to take them and vivify them."*

"My daughter, you must lead souls to My feet, you must bring them near to Me. I shall be in the midst of them, a good Shepherd, in order to convert them."

To reanimate the zeal of His Chosen One, Our Lord sometimes offered her the spectacle of the marvels worked in souls.

March 27, 1868, the Community was praying specially for the Pashal Retreat of Lémenc:

"My daughter," said the divine Master, *"I wish to make you go out of the Cloister."*

At first these words caused great fright to the innocent child! She then felt herself transported in spirit to the parish Church. Our Lord showed Himself to her, holding in His Hand a cup full of His Precious Blood:

"I wish, My daughter, that you should be a witness of the favors that I am about to grant."

And Sister Mary Martha saw the Savior place a drop of His Divine Blood in souls. She had even the unspeakable consolation of seeing Him act in the same manner for the souls of her father and mother, whilst from the divine lips fell these words:

"The graces that I bestow in this manner are never lost."

In favor of the dying, the zeal of our Sister was surpassingly great.

"When they prepare My Altar," said the good Master, *"they give Me great pleasure, but when they gain souls for Paradise for Me, My consolation is incomparably greater.*

"You must often offer the merits of My Holy Wounds for persons who die in the night or during the course of the day."

We find in the Manuscripts the details of certain nights passed in accompanying souls that Jesus showed to her as very near to entering into their eternity:

"You are charged with all these souls; you must obtain a good death for them!"

Souls! Sister Mary Martha "charged" herself with them with the more ardor as their salvation and perfection glorified God. She understood so well that she was on this earth only *"to procure the glory of God and to make Him loved."* And then, in this, as in all, Our Lord enlightened and stimulated her:

"My daughter, I constantly desire that men may profit by the fruit of My Redemption. But, faithful or not, My glory must result from it."

One day three brilliant rays darting from the Holy Wounds of Jesus appeared, to the eyes of our Sister, to envelop souls that were saved by the merits of the Redeemer. Whoever had contributed to procure this benefit for them also received from them a great glory, which increased the glory of God:

"In making souls profit by the fruits of My Passion," explained the Savior, *"you increase the Kingdom of God."*

Filled with enthusiasm, the ardent heart of the humble cloistered Missionary responded by this expressive cry:

"My Jesus, I thirst for souls for Thy glory!"

III

THE SOULS IN PURGATORY

The apostolic flame of Sister Mary Martha was not extinguished at the gates of the tomb. A great advocate of sinners and of the dying, our Sister was no less devoted to the souls in Purgatory. Besides, these souls constantly claimed her sufferings and her prayers:

"Look! . . . Oh, help us! . . . Offer the Holy Wounds of Jesus for us! . . .

In her turn she repeated to Our Lord. *"Help them, by Thy divine Wounds!"*

"Help them, by Thy divine Wounds!"

To help them is truly the desire of Jesus. He expects **to be prayed to,** He invites Sister Mary Martha to do so. He had addressed to His Spouse this astonishing word of goodness: *"When a poor creature like you is united to Me, she can do everything! She moves Purgatory and she fills Heaven!"*

He had assigned her a place for her mission of supplicant: *"You do not belong to this earth. Your life is suspended between Heaven and Purgatory . . . You should regard yourself as at the gate of Purgatory in order to make souls come out . . . At the gate of Heaven in order to take souls and make them enter."*

He continues His appeals with His encouragements: *"I give My riches to the humble and to the little in order that they may be restored to Me by the deliverance of the souls from Purgatory."*

"Sinners are seen, and more think of praying for them. As to the souls in Purgatory, they are not seen, the world often forgets them . . . There are but few souls that do not go to Purgatory; I wish that you should pray much."

And the prayer that Jesus counsels is that which makes a direct appeal to the merits of His Passion: *"My daughter look at My Wounds, offer them for the souls in Purgatory. The sufferings of My Holy Passion,—behold the great remedy for these poor souls; but its merits must be applied to them."*

One night, Sister Mary Martha, plunged in fervent prayer, was asking the relief of her friends in Purgatory. Jesus Crucified, appearing before her, said:

"I wish to grant you a soul for each of My Wounds."

And from interval to interval, our dear Sister saw a soul as if escaping from the Wounds of Jesus to fly to Heaven: the first and the second came forth from His Sacret Feet, and the last from His right Hand: *"This was the most precious."*

Is it necessary to say it? Among the suffering souls, there are some that are nearest to the heart of a Religious: they are the souls of her own Sisters. Sister Mary Martha prayed and suffered most particularly for them, and the Blessed Virgin testified her satisfaction for it: *"The souls of your Sisters in Purgatory are my daughters. I take great pleasure in hearing you pray for their deliverance . . . I suffer to see them in this fire! . . . I am Queen, and I wish that these souls should reign with me! In spite of all my power, my Son and I cannot deliver them: they must expiate. But you can so*

easily relieve them and open Heaven to them by offering the Holy Wounds for them to God the Father."

To prayer, Sister Mary Martha joined **immolation** of days and nights in the attitude that we have described. One evening, the Victim of Jesus, extended upon the ground loaded with all her instruments of penance, was suffering in an unusual manner. Several souls from Purgatory appeared to her: *"Tomorrow your day will be all for us."*

This was a terrible day: one of those days during which the Lord, as with the holy man Job, permitted Satan to afflict His Servant, a day of complete abandonment by Jesus!

In the evening the Spouse returned more tender than ever and opening to her His Sacred Heart: *"Behold, your salvation,"* He said, *"by the violent temptation that you have suffered and by your abandonment, great numbers of souls have been delivered from Purgatory. Sufferings were necessary for them."*

On one of the Ascension vigils, Jesus likewise said to her: *"My daughter, do not expect to enjoy today, because many souls ought by your sufferings to arrive in Heaven to assist at My triumph."* In effect, she suffered greatly. But what happiness, the following night, and what a recompense! *"I have made you suffer for souls that I wished to take out of Purgatory, and now that they are in Heaven, you are going to enjoy the sight of My Blessed Ones."*

Another precious means utilized by our Sister in this mission of charity was the **offering of her actions** in union with the Holy Wounds. One evening at the hour of going to table, she felt surrounded by suffering souls that said to her: *"We*

are going to the Refectory with you that you may give us something to eat." At the the same time an interior light made her understand the meaning of such a request: these souls solicited, for their deliverance, actions done in union with the Wounds of the Savior.

Another day, experiencing an irresistible need of withdrawing into her heart, she perceived, as it were, a chain binding earth to Purgatory and Purgatory to Heaven. And the Savior Himself said to her: *"I wish that all your hearts should make but one with Heaven and Purgatory."*

A still more efficacious means: **The Holy Mass and the Holy Communion.** We shall simply indicate in regard to this, that in accordance with the desire expressed by Our Lord, the Community offered the Holy Communion on every Monday for the Souls in Purgatory and for the good of the Church.

We shall also mention that a great number of the Sisters formed the habit of offering the Holy Wounds between the two elevations of the Holy Mass, for which the souls in Purgatory testified their grateful joy: *"Now, every day is Monday, every day is a feast for us!"*

Let us finally signalize **Indulgences.** Like Christ Himself, the Holy Church loves the souls in Purgatory, and by the power that she holds from Christ, she offers us a means of delivering them. Sister Mary Martha was too loving a daughter and too supernaturally enlightened not to have recourse to them. If the invocations to the Holy Wounds were perpetually on her lips, who will say the number of indulgenced prayers, "De profundis" and "Requiem", that

she unceasingly joined to them. And when the feast of All Souls came, or still better the great Indulgence of the Portiuncula, who can tell with what avidity the former Tertiary profited by these spiritual gifts of the Church! This feast of August 2, which brought the anniversary of her religious Profession, was a day of special fervor in the service of her suffering friends. She consecrated to them all her free time, and it was said that her visits sometimes reached a hundred.

Besides the satisfaction of responding to the desires of the Heart of Jesus, our dear Sister received in the accomplishment of "her task" other encouragements. It is thus that Our Lord seems to have granted her a sort of knowledge of the sufferings endured in Purgatory, and to have permitted her to contemplate the joy of the Elect upon the arrival in Heaven of the delivered souls. He also made known to her that in Heaven ingratitude is not known.

"My little Sister Mary Martha," said one of them, *"look at all of these souls that you have delivered by your prayers and sufferings! . . . They cannot now all come to thank you; but they will come to meet you when you shall leave this world."*

TRIALS
PARTICULAR GRACES
LAST YEARS
AND DEATH

CHAPTER XXVI

TRIALS

Contradictions
Fears of Illusion—Abandonment
Assaults of the Demon

> "God has tried them and found them worthy of Himself. As gold in the furnace He hath proved them, and as a victim of a holocaust He hath received them."
> (Wisdom III, 5, 6.)

THE life of Sister Mary Martha evidently could not pass without trials. This is easy to understand: a number of things so far removed from the ordinary train could not but be astonishing. Her long fast of five years, variously interpreted,—different measures taken by authority and which sometimes seemed contrary to common sense,—this practice of the two new invocations,—the silence kept by Superiors and by her, who was interested, even in relation to her graces,—the enigmatical and indefinable condition that enveloped our Sister as with a veil,—an impression of the supernatural allied to a certain astonishment before persistent imperfections . . . all this hardly permitted a definite opinion. All this, existing in minds, as it were, unconsciously, led in 1875, to a distressing incident.

The canonical visit was approaching, the first to be made by our new Archbishop. Sister Mary Martha warned her

confidantes: *"It will be terrible; but finally you will be consoled."*

In fact, some Sisters, doubtless with good intentions but perhaps imprudent, mentioned to His Grace several things that appeared to them inexplicable in Sister Mary Martha,—inexplicable and intolerable. God permitted that without thinking of obtaining light from the Superior in regard to these matters, the Prelate thought that he should give satisfaction to the malcontents, and he publicly declared his opinion before the whole Community assembled, and in a rather severe manner! The trial was hard; however, our Mothers humbly submitted to the orders received and drank in silence the bitter chalice. It may be imagined what were then the prayers of our beloved Sister to whom Monseigneur had forbidden to continue her daily Communion . . . The result was not long awaited. Canon Bouvier, our Chaplain, knew so well how to plead before His Grace the cause of this humble and mortified soul, that the pious Prelate left him full latitude . . . and the incident was closed.

But other trials crossed the life of our Sister; it is of these that we wish to speak. As a refiner of precious gold in the furnace, so God tries the incomparable gold of holy souls in the Church. One of their frequent trials—and not the least painful—**is the fear of being the sport of the eternal enemy of mankind.** On one side, they are not ignorant that the demon sometimes transforms himself into an angel of light, in order to deceive souls and lead them into error or pride. On the other side, humility forbids them to believe themselves objects of the predilections of the

Most High. This was somtimes for Sister Mary Martha a very great pain, from which Our Lord never wished to deliver her completely. On the day after the most remarkable favors, the soul of our dear Sister passed nearly always through some moral torture. It is also true that Jesus nearly always gave her a sweet and comforting word. After a night of anguish when exhausted by the struggle: *"It is I who am your strength,"* He said, *"I will communicate it to you . . . I am satisfied with your sufferings."* And Sister Mary Martha was immediately strengthened and alert for her work.

Since then, our very honored Mother assures us, the pain still lasts; but it is no longer so intense as during the first year; it remains on the surface of the soul, for in the depths, it is no longer possible for our Sister to doubt that God conducts her.

However, a circumstance was to replunge the dear Privileged One into her mortal disquietude. At the time of the Ember days (1870) having made some allusions to her interior state to an extraordinary Confessor, she was told briefly that her way might be only an illusion and a deceit. The effect of these words upon Sister Mary Martha may be imagined. Our Blessed Father had pity on the poor afflicted child and came to reassure her: *"My daughter, if I could come on earth to make laws I should preserve those that I have made; and for you, I would give you one in particular. I will aid you to walk on in your way and I will give you special counsels, even though I am no longer on earth."*

Innumerable as well as cunning were the tricks employed by the demon to trouble Sister Mary Martha. Sometimes he

insinuated that she was beyond the Rule and a bad example for the Sisters . . . that she was going to suffer in the other world if she did not change her ways. Sometimes he showed her pretended "graces" as pure imaginations: *"Hypocrite! Sorceress! you deceive and you are deceived . . . your Superiors see it well, but they do not wish to tell it to you."* And a thousand like things which greatly terrified the poor victim. Sometimes the demon accuses her of taking exaggerated care of her body. *"You love life too much, you will lose it . . . You love too much to take care ofyourself, you are going to burn in hell!"* (1) Or else he made her believe that she had fallen into pride: *"You think you are a Saint, but there is no Heaven for you . . ."*

"Oh, well!" replied our humble Sister, *"then I shall cling to the feet of Jesus and the Saints."*

Then she was troubled, fearing, by this answer, to have shown in effect some pride.

"Yes, you have committed the sin of the Angels," the liar frequently affirmed, *"you will go to hell with them."*

The tactics of the demon tended at the same time to separate her from those who could enlighten her: *"You are a cross for your Superiors, say nothing to them!"*

Once he even aroused in her mind a thousand murmuring thoughts against authority. The suggestion was so strong that it seemed to our poor Sister that she consented to these temptations; this caused her extreme pain. Feeling herself restrained by an invisible power that prevented her from having recourse to our Mother, she came, in tears, to

(1) "There was no one who thought less of her body than this poor child," declares our very honored Mother Thérèse-Eugénie.

take refuge near the Blessed Sacrament. Jesus received her with the sweet reproach:

"My child, have you forgotten Me? . . . If you would have recourse to Me with confidence I would serve you as a Mother . . . If you had turned towards Me, I would have delivered you . . . You must cling to Me and pray, then Satan will go away . . . "

How touching is the goodness of Jesus towards souls! He makes them suffer, for suffering is useful to them,—necessary. But one would say that He Himself endured the pains that He permits, such haste He has to relieve them as soon as He can do so without suppressing the merit. This is the spectacle that the Spouse of love offers us in His relations with His preferred One. Let us prove it in this new example.

One evening when her anguish was sharper than usual, Sister Mary Martha turned towards Our Lord: *"Would it be possible, Oh, my good Master, that a heart that loves Thee so much, that speaks so often with Thee, that is daily united to Thee in the Holy Communion, should perish?"*

Hardly had she formulated this loving complaint than the temptation vanished. The sweet voice of Jesus made itself heard: *"No, My beloved,"* said He, in drawing her to His Heart, *"you will be there for time and eternity. All who have loved Me and who have lived your life are now in Paradise with Me."*

The Divine Master did not fail to cause His Spouse to pass that other trial so terrible to love: **Absence.** The absence of Jesus cast Sister Mary Martha into a true agony. Then she could be seen wandering everywhere,

seeming to ask as the Lover in the Canticles: *"Have you seen my Beloved?"*

This absence was sometimes the punishment of a light infidelity. Jesus returning brought pardon and joy with these words: *"I have purified everything in you by this abandonment."*

At other times love alone was the cause: love renders lovers conformed: *"My daughter, I have wept in the garden of Olives and on the Cross, in My great abandonment,"* He said to her, after having remained several days without responding to her sighs and tears. The same lesson was repeated to her by His Immaculate Mother: *"I come to announce to you the abandonment of Jesus in order that you may participate in His divine abandonment on the Cross when He was forsaken by His Father."*

In August, 1869, after having admitted her to contemplate in the midst of the Blessed in Heaven, the Father and the Son in their glory and power, Our Lord was suddenly eclipsed, not to be seen nor felt, during an entire week, leaving Sister Mary Martha given over to an inexpressible suffering. When Jesus returned He taught her the cause of this abandonment: *"On the Cross, in the deepest of My sufferings, I was all alone . . . Behold, why I have wished that you should thus suffer."* Again He said to her: *"Love hides itself that it may be sought . . . I return, but do not expect that it will be forever . . . I shall go away again and this will be useful for you, as you would not love Me so much if I remained always present to your eyes."*

A second intention of Jesus was to draw His Servant to a perfect interior detachment. For this purpose the good

Master left her for fifteen consecutive days in this absolute abandonment. Not accustomed to this state, Sister Mary Martha was an object of pity . . . The words that she had said to her Superior shortly before: *"When God wishes to make a soul suffer nothing can relieve it,"* had their entire fulfillment in her. Finally, Jesus imposed upon His Spouse this martyrdom of absence for the salvation of other souls: *"My daughter, through the severe temptation that you have endured and by your interior abandonment, several sinners were converted and several souls were delivered from Purgatory . . . Your sufferings were necessary for this."*

We shall no further describe these touching scenes,—the anguish, the raptures, and the ineffable joy of His return after the abandonment. These, every soul that truly loves can guess and feel; we should speak in vain to others.

Another trial known to all the children of Adam, proceeded from the temptations and conditions of our fallen nature. For Sister Mary Martha the importunity of these temptations was increased tenfold by the malice of Lucifer, who hoped thereby, if not to cause her to fall into evil, at least to trouble her in her task and to paralyze her zeal. So, as we have said, he turned into derision her practices of piety, notably the offering of the Holy Wounds. Sometimes he sought to prevent her from accomplishing her duty: *"Do not return to your work, you will be damned in it."* He disquieted her in regard to her health in order to prevent her from rendering service: *"Do not go to the garden any more, your health will be injured there."* Sometimes there were thoughts of discouragement, temptations to discontent: *"Ask for rest, your Mother is too hard on you."* Again these

were suggestions against faith: *"Of what use are your Communions?"* One day even, at five different times, he came under a corporal form, remaining at a distance and repeating: *"There is no God, of what use are your prayers since there is no God? . . ."*

Sister Mary Martha forcibly protested: *"He is my Spouse! . . . He is my nourishment!"*

At this response the devil fled in smoke.

The evil spirit also attempted to inspire her with pride by perfidious insinuations: *"The Community is very happy to have you . . ."*

"Yes," answers Jesus, preserving His Spouse in adding the corrective: *"very happy because of your ignorance."*

Once only Our Lord permitted attacks against the limpidity of this innocent soul: *"There are only lies in you. You have committed many sins against the sixth Commandment."*

Such an accusation troubled the candid child much. She ran to ask her Superior: *"What are these sins? . . . I do not know them."*

The assaults of the devil were not to be limited to these multiplied temptations. All kinds of vexations will be put in action by him in order to torture her in soul and body. Superiors, ocular witnesses of these facts, will note painfully the persecutions and bad treatment that the infernal enemy, with the permission of God, inflicted upon her. This desperate condition was established above all in the great needs of the Church or of individual souls. In the midst of these combats Sister Mary Martha resisted with all the valor of her faith and of her love. If there were

particularly distressing hours, Jesus intervened to sustain her weakness, encouraging her with His voice or giving her the comfort of His divine Presence: *"Come, My child, hide yourself in My Heart. It is there that My Mother drew her humility . . . Follow the examples of humility that I give you by My Holy Infancy and you will conquer the demon."* Even at the height of the diabolical pursuit, He maintained, all powerful in her soul, the sentiment of duty: *"My daughter, always go where duty calls you."*

"As soon as the moment comes for her service with the pupils," notes the Superior, "our Sister sufficiently resumes her strength and presence of mind to acquit herself of it."

He reminds her that it is for souls that she suffers: *"My beloved, if I make you suffer without relaxation, it is because the wicked, particularly, sleep not."*

Sometimes, He even made her know the price of these crucifying sufferings. Once, among other times, Sister Mary Martha learned in advance of the sickness, then of the death, of a gentleman of the parish whom she named to her Superior, and for whose salvation Our Lord permitted that she should pass through a veritable martyrdom. This soul came to thank her: *"It is for me that you have suffered so much. The demon was enraged at losing me. I owe you my salvation; my place was in hell and I am in Heaven through the merits of the Wounds of Jesus that you have invoked for me."*

The details of this death were verified by our very honored Mother and were found to be perfectly exact. (May-June, 1869.)

September 4, of the same year, relates the Manuscript, our child had to suffer, on the part of the spirit of darkness, a desperate and terrible struggle. At one o'clock in the morning, physically and morally broken, she sank exhausted on the floor to pass the rest of the night there. . . . Suddenly the humble cell was filled with brightness . . . God the Father appeared as well as Our Lord on the Cross. Jesus said: *"My Father, look at Me . . . I am in this state loaded with all the sins of the world."* Then casting a loving look upon the innocent victim stretched at His feet, the sweet Redeemer added: *"You also are loaded with the sins of men."*

Then Sister Mary Martha extended her arms to offer her painful Calvary in union with that of the divine Crucified, whilst from her heart, as an echo, darted forth this cry: *"My God, I also pray to Thee for all Thy creatures."*

But the hour of suffering was past; an intense consolation filled her heart. An extreme hunger for God took possession of her: *"My God, come quickly . . . give me this Bread with which one has no more hunger. Give me of this water with which there is no more thirst! . . . I offer Thee my heart and those of my Mothers! . . . My God, make up to them what they have done for me . . . Inflame their hearts with Thy holy Love! . . . Oh, come, come divine Jesus!"*

Suddenly she exclaimed: *"Oh, He is there, the divine Infant!"*

Yes, He was there responding to the passionate call of His Spouse, giving Himself to her. And feeling the effects of this marvelous Communion, the happy Ecstatic, enjoying her Treasure, said from time to time: *"He inflames me with love as a burning ray."* The ecstasy was prolonged until dawn.

CHAPTER XXVII

PARTICULAR GRACES

"God is able to make all grace abound in you."
(II Cor., IX-8.)

I

EXTRAORDINARY VIEWS

WAS it from her love for Our Lord that Sister Mary Martha drew an abundance of light? We find in her, knowledge that it would be difficult to account for naturally. God seems to have endowed her with the gift of reading the future. Divers examples we have already met in the course of our pages, incidentally signalized as they occurred. We shall add a few examples.

At the time of the great difficulties of Pope Pius IX, particularly from 1866-1870, Sister Mary Martha, without being informed of the events, lived them in her heart before the Tabernacle. The very day of the battle of Mentana, she learned of the success of the pontifical troops, to which, said Jesus, the invocations to the Holy Wounds had contributed. She made this known to her Superiors, who, later, had the confirmation of it in the parlor. As to the Vatican Council, we have already noted that she followed it, so to say, at a distance. (1)

(1) Chapter XXV.

The death of Pius IX, was announced to her January 15, 1878, by a mysterious vision of which she did not then understand the meaning.

A great profession of holy Pontiffs came from Heaven, and returned there, conducting to the celestial sojourn, a Saint clothed in a golden robe of extraordinary brilliancy. This last one, however, remained at the gate of Paradise, whilst the other Pontiffs said to our Sister: *"We shall leave him here now, but he will soon be among us,"* after which they disappeared in glory.

She had the same view each day, and as all her fear was that God was about to call to Himself our worthy chaplain, Canon Bouvier, who was then suffering, she imagined that this was to announce his death.

January 29, she understood that the glorious troop of Pontiffs would soon return to take their holy Friend. Finally, February 9, during the Stations of the Cross for our Holy Father, Pope Pius IX, the soul of this august deceased appeared, all glorious, to Sister Mary Martha, who then recognized him whom God had shown to her clothed in gold at the gate of Paradise. He went straight to Heaven by the merits of the Holy Wounds of Jesus. (Manuscript.)

In what concerned France, Sister Mary Martha knew in advance the war of 1870: In the month of May Our Lord had said to her among other things: **"I wish to melt the world."** (1)

(1) "Je veux faire fondre". These words obviously have a mystic significance. Our Lord wanted to soften the world, to cause its heart to melt, and He chose the way of suffering, war, strife, etc. Rev. W. J. McG., S. J.

The Superior not understanding this word dispensed herself from noting it. Some weeks later, Our Lord renewed the charge: *"This word has not been written, I wish it to be."* Then in the month of August, He clearly explained the signification.

January 21, 1871, she learned of the horrors of the Commune: *"There will be massacres of priests, of religious . . . I will not permit this to happen in your country."* (Savoy.)

As to the interior history of the Community she supplied a great deal of surprising knowledge, foresight, or predictions, which the Superior and the Novice Mistress verified with an astonishment easy to understand.

Our Sister seemed sometimes *"to read consciences."* We thought to have recognized in a Sister three points to which she ought to apply herself. We pointed out two, not yet daring to attack the third. The next morning our dear Privileged Sister came with humility to call our attention to the omission: *"Mother, Our Lord says that in the soul of Sister N . . . there are three points to which she must apply herself."*

"I was stupefied," said the Superior. (Manuscript.)

Sometimes our dear Sister took to our Mother from the good Master, as she said, information concerning the interior dispositions and the needs of one of us. And when the Superior made use of this advice, she invariably received an answer like this: *"Mother, how true, what you tell Me! One would think that the good God makes you read what passes in my soul."*

Again, it was the soul of the Superior herself that became as transparent as crystal for Sister Mary Martha: *"Mother,*

our good Master tells me to pray for you because today you are in such a disposition." Again, *"Oh, Mother, you are too much affected by such and such a thing . . . Our Lord is not pleased . . ."*

And what our beloved Sister said to me, was always perfectly exact. Not having communicated my interior dispositions to any one, I could not doubt but that God had revealed them Himself to our child! And this happened a number of times. (Manuscript.)

The Servant of God read also, for certain things, in the book of the future. Thus our Mothers were generally warned by her of the deaths, more or less near, of our deceased Sisters. It was then the secret of Superiors; their manuscript unveiled it to us later.

One month before the death of our Sister Marie-Justine Gojon (deceased December 9, 1866), Our Lord made known to Sister Mary Martha that He intended to recall her to Himself. *"Ask Me,"* He said to her, *"not to enter into judgment with this soul."* Then He showed her in all its details, a circumstance in the life of this dear Sister, who, when Procuratrix, had been too hard towards the neighbor. It was twenty-five years since the thing had happened, and our very honored Mother Marie-Alexis Blanc, alone, knew the circumstances of this affair. Sister Mary Martha indicated the year, named the persons, etc., . . . to the stupefaction of her Mistress. She suffered much on the days preceding the death of Sister Marie-Justine. In order to console His little Spouse, the Divine Master then showed her this soul ascending to Heaven, all purified and glorious. Shortly after, the Deceased came herself to thank our

Privileged Sister for the prayers and sufferings endured for her intention. Since then, not only was Sister Mary Martha notified of the approach of death, but her interior vision followed into the "Beyond" the dear ones who had taken their flight. Thus it happened for one of the dearest members of her double family, spiritual and natural: her sister Mariette, who had become in religion, Sister Marie-Claudine.

At first inclined towards trifles, whilst preserving an upright and pure soul, this dear youngest sister owed her vocation to the prayers of her elder (1) sister. Intelligent, gifted with good judgment, with all the qualities suited to her rank, and particularly clever, she was very useful in the various employments assigned her by obedience; but above all the Community founded its hope upon the virtues it saw her acquire each day.

One night in September, 1870, the Servant of God was as usual before the Blessed Sacrament. Our Lord had made known to her that He was soon going to take to Himself our little Sister Marie-Claudine, who was only two years professed and but twenty-five years old. She saw her clothed in white, extended lifeless on the altar as a victim . . . but of radiant beauty. The Blessed were surrounding and contemplating her, and Jesus said: *"Now, she will die no more!"*

(1) Touched by the happiness of the dear novice at the moment of her profession, Mariette had begged that she would obtain for her when under **the pall,** the grace of some day sharing this happiness with her. She was fully heard, becoming afterwards of a remarkable piety, and never ceasing to aspire to the total gift of herself to Our Lord.

It is traditional in The Visitation that the prayers of the happy professed, buried under the pall — symbol of separation from the world and self — have a special efficacy.

"Sister Mary Martha understood that it was incumbent on her to finish the crown of her Sister and to clothe her for the eternal nuptials. She prayed and suffered much.

In the course of October, an imprudence caused by a devotedness that knew not how to spare self, brought on the illness from which Sister Marie-Claudine was not to recover. May 17, 1871, she received the last Sacraments; on the afternoon of the 20th a voice from Heaven warned Sister Mary Martha that the hour of separation was near: *"By the great sufferings that you have endured in your body and in your soul, you have finished her crown and paid her debt."* At these words she felt a great interior peace.

About four o'clock she placed a flower at the feet of the Blessed Virgin in her little oratory: *"My good Mother, I offer you this flower for my sister Marie-Claudine."*

"I am going for her," answered Mary.

Our Sister went promptly to the Infirmary, where she saw the Immaculate Virgin leaning over the dying Sister with our regretted Mother Marie-Pauline Delapigny. At the end of Matins, surrounded by Mothers from Heaven and the Mothers of earth, under the envious looks of her beloved Sister, the dear agonizing Sister departed for Heaven. Her immediate entrance into Beatitude was shown to Sister Mary Martha already kneeling at the Choir door for her holy vigil: *"I thank you, my Sister! . . . If my crown is so beautiful, I owe it to you in great part."*

The sight of the happiness of this soul rekindled in our Sister her ardent desire of death and Heaven; and bursting

into tears she conjured her sister to obtain that she might soon join her: *"It is I who should have gone first since I am the elder."*

"Your crown will be still more beautiful than mine, because you save souls by the Holy Wounds of Jesus . . . You must continue to work both for you and for me . . . When your 'task' is finished, I shall come to take you."

Sister Mary Martha often saw her, always adorned in surpassing beauty: *"I am the Spouse and I follow the Lamb everywhere,"* said in a ravishing voice, the blessed soul of this dear younger sister.

It was the same for our Sister Marie-Anastase Jay, (1880.) A heavenly voice warned Sister Mary Martha: *"A Sister will be taken ill with consumption and will not be cured."*

Sister Marie-Anastase, seized by this malady, succumbed on the 15th of the following October. A week before her death, the day of the burial of Msgr. Pichenot, whose first novice and godchild she was, the venerable Deceased appeared to our Privileged One and said to her: *"You are going to suffer eight days for Sister Marie-Anastase. All the prayers said for her cure have served for her sanctification . . . your sufferings will be for her purgatory. Eight days are very little . . . and she will be buried at the same hour that I was."*

Eight days after the funeral of Msgr. Pichenot, hour for hour, we accompanied our young Sister to her last resting place.

Thus it was for a number of others, so that our successive Mothers took the habit of interrogating the humble

Sister when a Sister was approaching her end: "Will it be today?" . . .

Our Sister answered simply. Never was she mistaken, although her work sometimes kept her at a distance from the dying Sisters, and did not permit her to follow the progress of the illness. When God called to Himself one of the children of the school, it was rare that the good Sister Mary Martha did not have a knowledge of it. Questioned by one of her confidantes, our regretted Mother Jeanne-Marie-Anne Spinella, so long the amiable and beloved Directress of the School, gave this answer: *"Every time I made known to her my anxieties in regard to a sick pupil, Sister Mary Martha told me what the issue of the sickness would be, and every time, what she said was realized."*

The lights of our dear Sister extended to the members of her family. In 1880, the death of the youngest of her brothers was announced to her in an astonishing manner. It seemed to her that he was preparing a splendid marriage feast in which many guests were taking part. The host was distributing bread of a perfect whiteness and an exquisite taste. *"There is no such wedding feast as this on earth,"* he said to her, and he invited her to prepare each portion.

A few days later, Sister Mary Martha learned of the death of this dear brother, whose blessed soul appeared to her immediately: *"'It was I who invited you to the marriage feast that you were to prepare by your prayers and sufferings. However, my life was conformed to holiness: I was good in regard to the neighbor. I have been gentle and patient, I have accomplished my Christian duties, and I have not been attached to earthly things . . . My task is finished and I am*

going straight to Heaven . . . as for you, you must still suffer, that you may fulfill the Will of God to the end: You are chosen from On High to accomplish unknown designs."

The following year it was her father's turn. Our Sister knew that he was sick and asked God for the recovery of this good father, if such were His Will.

"Let him come, this is the moment," said a familiar voice which seemed to be from her brothers and sister in Heaven. *"Even though you should be told that he is better, do not believe it."*

January 2, 1882, after Holy Communion, she heard her father's voice: *"You will never see me again, fresh, ruddy, and well. My body is at this moment pale and icy."*

While she was doubting as to whether this was really her father's voice, there was a ring at the door. *"It is for you, they have come to announce my death,"* resumed the voice.

It was truly for her; her eldest brother asked for her to communicate the sad news.

"Sister Mary Martha was in unspeakable grief," writes the Superior. "She was soon consoled, however, for the soul of the dear deceased said to her: *"I am very happy. I am loaded with merits and riches through the Holy Wounds of Jesus! . . ."*

Always the Holy Wounds! The pledge of salvation, that a long time before, Our Lord had offered to His Servant, adding, one day: *"A religious soul that goes into the other world without having obtained the salvation of all her relatives has not performed her task."*

After the death of the former Mothers who were the depositaries of her secrets, although always silent and buried more and more in the hidden life, Sister Mary Martha respectfully approached the Superior, saying to her what, doubtless, Our Lord had required that she should make known. Afterwards she withdrew without adding a word more, without troubling herself as to whether or not attention had been paid to her words.

At the time that prudence required that we should assure ourselves of a place of shelter in this land of exile, we at first had recourse to the compassionate charity of our Monasteries of Italy. The Visitation of Turin was to receive a certain number of our Sisters. February 24, 1903, Sister Mary Martha, approaching our very honored Mother Jeanne-Marie-Anne, with a troubled and preoccupied manner, said to her: *"Mother, something serious is occurring in regard to Turin."* The day after, we received the dispatch announcing the death of our very honored Mother Thérèse-Angélique Crotti de Castiglione and, shortly after, the news that for divers reasons independent of their good will, our dear Sisters could no longer offer us the promised hospitality . . . We should be obliged to seek elsewhere a place of security.

Some years later, on propositions coming from without, a rather important decision had to be made. The matter was completely unknown to the Community, the Superior not having spoken of it except to her Counsel. The question had been considered in the morning. What was not the surprise of our very honored Mother, when, at the moment of leaving the refectory, Sister Mary Martha approached her and said very humbly: *"Mother, Our Lord says that this must not be done."*

Then still more humbly, she withdrew very quickly to her place.

Thus Jesus continued to watch over us with love, and to instruct His faithful Spouse regarding His Will concerning us . . . And we knew it not! How often since her death, do we hear regret expressed by her last Superior, for not having interrogated the dear Privileged One more frequently. But it entered into the designs of God to keep her hidden according to the promise that He had made her. (1)

II

ECSTASIES

We know of the spiritual consolations and intense joys of Sister Mary Martha. We have read delightful and touching pages filled with accounts of visits from the Infant Jesus, the appeals of Jesus Crucified, the communings with God the Father, the encouragements of the Most Holy Virgin and the Saints. These favors habitually left the happy Sister mistress of herself, free to attend to the occupations of her employments that she continued to fulfill, her eyes interiorly fixed upon the celestial vision. But it sometimes also happened to her to find herself, as it were, entirely absorbed in God and deprived of the use of her external senses: this was the irresistible divine attraction,

(1) Our Mother Jeanne-Marie-Anne Spinella admitted that, when several times she was at the point of interrogating our Venerated Sister Marie-Alexis in regard to Sister Mary Martha, she felt herself restrained by a certain reserve that she could not explain.

perhaps,—ecstasy. Most frequently the cause was the apparition of Our Lord in a state of extraordinary glory.

Did our Sister really see the Divine Master with her bodily eyes?

"We had been forbidden to question her," said one of her companions, "but one day, I said to her, 'Sister Mary Martha, you see Our Lord, do you not?' . . . "

"No, I do not see Him, but it is as if I did," she answered.

However, it seemed to her sometimes that her corporal eyes had the vision of the holy Humanity of Jesus. In her relations are found expressions like these, indicating the difference: *"I see with the eyes of the soul,"* or else, very rarely: *"This time I saw Him with bodily eyes."*

Whatever it may have been, our Mothers have noted a number of very striking cases of *"suspension of the senses."* Those among us who were witnesses of it, kept a precise remembrance that the publication of the manuscript notes revives, in giving to the facts a new sense.

"April 22, 1871, from the dawn of day, our dear child found herself strongly attracted to her God. She saw Our Lord and, when the moment of Communion came, she heard herself called by Him: *"Come quickly, My Spouse!"* These words inflamed her with love . . . The whole morning passed in the most intimate and sensible union. During the Chapter (1) of this day, after having told her faults, she lost the use of her senses and fainted away. After two hours, she returned to herself as a person who awakes from a deep sleep.

"Interrogated by us, she answered in a few words that she had seen Our Lord with His Glorious Wounds . . . *"Oh, when*

(1) A Community assembly.

shall we see them in Heaven!" And addressing our very honored Mother: *"I cannot stand any longer; my strength fails me at the sight of my good Master. He leans towards me and looks at me with such great love!"*

However, the Savior gave her sufficient strength to support His divine Presence, which she continued to enjoy whilst performing her usual work.

"June 20, of the same year, the Community, reunited in the Oratory dedicated to the Sacred Heart, was making the novena preparatory to the feast, when Our Lord appeared anew to His humble Servant, His Wounds shining with such glory that she immediately lost consciousness and fell to the ground. She had to be carried to her bed. Her countenance was bright and beautiful, and she seemed to be enjoying a quiet rest. Several of our Sisters, thinking that she was ill, went to see her, and found her condition as we have said. She remained thus for more than forty-eight hours without giving any sign of consciousness. She awoke without knowing the duration of her sleep, and, although very weak, returned to her occupations without having taken a drink or any kind of nourishment.

Sister Mary Martha, whilst losing the knowledge of what surrounded her, did not habitually fall into weakness, as we have just related . . . Ordinarily she remained motionless, kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament for hours or entire nights.

One feast day, pressed with work, she asked a Sister to replace her for her adoration before the Most Blessed Sacrament; but Our Lord objected: *"I will not allow another to come here in your place,"* He said.

She immediately yielded, humbled herself profoundly, then enumerated all the recommendations that she had to confide to Him, the needs of Holy Church, those of the Community . . . the harvest . . . etc.

Then Jesus said to her: *"I have heard all, come repose near Me."*

At that very instant, our Sister, became lost in God, and remained kneeling and motionless during an hour. She was thus in the pupils' places when they entered the Choir for the Sermon:

"Do you forget that you must not remain in the middle of the Choir when the Community is assembled for an exercise?" the Sister Sacristan then said to her. "The pupils are coming."

Sister Mary Martha, still lost in God, withdrew to her place. An accidental jolt from a Sister who passed near her, brought her back to the things of this world. *"She had,"* she said afterwards, *"such a great need of remaining with her Jesus."* After this grace she had much trouble in resuming her exterior work.

July 2, 1882, our little Sister remained in the Choir in ecstasy from five o'clock in the morning until seven. She perceived neither the sermon nor the Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament, nor did she notice that the Community and pupils had left.

One Sunday, in September, 1887, the Holy Infant Jesus having afforded her a glimpse of Heaven, Vespers had finished before the happy ecstatic returned to earth. As she was to carry the Cross in the procession, our Domestic Sisters shook her several times in order to bring her to herself. She was still so absorbed in God, however, that she had no physical

strength, and could scarcely walk. She wished to give the Cross to one of her companions, but the Infant Jesus opposed this: *"Shall it be said, My Spouse, that you have caused Me to be carried by another, after the graces that I have just bestowed upon you."*

"Ah, Lord, give me the strength."

Her strength returned immediately, and without trouble she accomplished her consoling function. At the following recreation, our Sisters asked her many questions:

"What did you do to lose yourself that way? What did you see?" etc.

It was a little war that filled the poor child with confusion . . .

We cannot multiply examples; but similar things happened frequently, there are constant traces of them in the course of our recital.

How many hours did not our Sister pass, her hands joined, eyes closed, without even coughing in her severest colds, as motionless as the dead! Sometimes, during the School vacations and retreats she was found in the Choir at one o'clock in the afternoon, her veil still down, (1) continuing her thanksgiving after Holy Communion . . . or on Christmas morning, having been enclosed after the Midnight Mass. (2)

Several times, our regretted Mother Jeanne-Françoise Breton, approaching her, took in her hands those of the holy esctatic . . . *"Her hands,"* said our Mother, *"were indescrib-*

(1) It is the custom of the Religious to lower the veil before going to Holy Communion and until the Gospel at the end of Mass.

(2) The Sister charged with closing the Choir had been notified not to mind the presence of Sister Mary Martha; it was understood that she would remain.

able; they had something of the immaterial. Their touch forced respect, affecting the whole being, penetrating it with a profound impression of the supernatural, it was like a contact with the 'Beyond'."

Two of our Sisters, perplexed by these long seances, thought to renew the trial to which the Ecstatic of Lourdes had been subjected. One day, upon finding Sister Mary Martha in ecstasy in the Infirmary gallery, two persons touched a lighted candle to her hands—she made not the least movement to indicate pain. Another stuck a pin into her fingers—Sister Mary Martha remained equally insensible.

The word "obedience", alone, recalled Sister Mary Matrha to herself. She then seemed to return from afar off; she would rise, wavering a little, then go with docility to do what she had been ordered.

Her Spiritual Aid once asked her: "Sister Mary Martha, how is it that the little Jesus sometimes keeps you all the morning in the Choir and at other times allows you to depart?"

She answered: *"Oh, well, you see, Sister, when I am not needed, when I have nothing to do, then, I do not know how it happens, I lose myself . . . there is nothing more . . . no more idea of time . . . We are there together . . . it is happiness!"*

To another of our Sisters, who questioned her in regard to the secret of her long seances in the Choir, Sister Mary Martha answered: *"Sister, I sleep . . ."*

It was truly, indeed, the mystic sleep of the Spouse.

CHAPTER XXVIII

DESIRE OF HEAVEN

"Our feet were standing in thy Courts, O Jerusalem!"
(Ps. CXXI, 2.)

AND now, it is towards Heaven, that at the call of Jesus, we shall—with Sister Mary Martha—raise the eyes of our soul.

Her soul lived in Heaven much more than on earth: her faith showed it to her as visible; hope and love inflamed her desire. And it is for this reason, that through sufferings or joys, through her own personal satisfaction or the hidden apostolate, this life is found constantly and totally directed towards Heaven. To go to Heaven by opening it to souls through the Holy Wounds: behold her sole ambition.

Thus has Sister Mary Martha appeared to us until now, thus does she appear still better, if we examine more closely certain pages of the manuscripts. We find therein consigned, as if coming from Our Lord, strong and beautiful thoughts on Eternity. We there assist at various visions regarding the glorious "Beyond."

We there note the intense desire for the Heavenly Fatherland and, already, an anticipated communion in the happiness of the Elect.

"Earth is nothing, My daughter," said the Lord Jesus to His Spouse . . . *"look at Heaven! Heaven alone is worthy of your desires! . . .*

"Recall your dwelling place and forget not that you belong to the great family of Heaven. You must always have your eyes on your nothingness, and your heart in Heaven."

Enlightening His Servant on the last end, He touched her one day by the spectacle of the separation of the soul from the body: *"The soul returns to God, Who is its element; the body returns to its element, which is the earth. The body will not become glorious at the general resurrection, except in virtue of the merits of the holy Humanity of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Then I shall raise it up by My Omnipotent Power, and souls will be happy to share their happiness with the inseparable companion of their poor terrestrial life."*

"You do not keep a sufficiently great feast on the day of your death! It is on this day that you shall reap what you have sown."

Of this heavenly happiness, did Sister Mary Martha sometimes receive a foretaste? Was a glimpse given to her of its splendors? The manuscripts affirm this in many places.

"Then," writes her Superior, "she is lost in astonishment at the sight of so much beauty! . . . At the sight of the great processions of the Elect . . . She, in some manner, participates in their joy . . . her soul truly tastes some of the joys of Paradise! She is wholly filled with them, but she is silent in the midst of so many marvels. The radiant expression of her

countenance alone betrays the unspeakable joy that nothing on earth can express."

We again read in the manuscripts that, February 27, 1873, Jesus Crucified showed Himself in His glory in the midst of virginal souls whom He designated to His Spouse in naming them. Then our happy Sister perceived *"the base of the throne of Mary"*, surrounded by a multitude of Virgins. It was not permitted to mortal eyes to mount higher, not even to perceive the feet of our Immaculate Queen. She saw only the pedestal of her throne. *"But this pedestal was so beautiful, and so transparent and shining,"* that she could find no words to describe it, everything appearing dull, compared with this extreme whiteness.

We recall that Sister Mary Martha's nights of adoration were sometimes passed entirely in elevations and visions of this kind: *"Then,"* she said, *"I cannot pray, I can only contemplate and enjoy."*

Sister Mary Martha did not always have the impression that her mind was carried to such heights; sometimes it seemed to her that Heaven descended to earth. Sometimes Jesus presented Himself alone: as the stars hide in the presence of the sun, thus did the Elect disappear in order to give place to their King speaking familiarly to His Beloved. Sometimes He appeared surrounded by His Court. Thus, "April 4, 1869, was for our child a day of delights," notes the manuscript. The Infant Jesus came to visit her with a cortège of Saints, among whom she distinguished the Holy Founders of the Visitation, Saint Bernard, Saint Claire, etc. . . . They gave

her their names, and Sister Mary Martha spoke to them very simply, as a child."

The Elect sustained with their protegée intimate and touching relations, above all on their feast days. Thus it was that October 4, 1867, Saint Francis Assisi, appeared to her in glory, "as a living image of Our Lord", encouraging her to contemplate within herself the Wounds of her Crucified Spouse. As to the Visitandines in Heaven, we know that she often enjoyed conversation with them. The Religious of our Community, happy beneficiaries of the devotion to the Holy Wounds and of the immolation of their little Sister, took pleasure in having her share their happiness:

"I have chosen Jesus for the only object of my love," said one of them. *"It is He Who has made all my perfection, it is He Who makes my crown."*

Jesus, crown of Virgins,—Jesus, crown of all Saints, after having been on earth "the object of their love". Behold, in fine, a glimpse of the reality which so many times cast Sister Mary Martha into ecstasy. So, it may be conceived, she was as the thirsty hart always panting the more for Heaven!

Our Sainted Sister Margaret Mary Alacoque, one day, declared to her who was her humble emulator on earth: *"Your martyrdom for life will be the fear of being deceived and the sight of Heaven which is often given to you. These two things will make you suffer more than anything else in the world."*

This was profoundly true! . . . The fear of illusion, what a cruel pain! A glimpse of Heaven and to remain here below,

what a martyrdom! How much did our Sister suffer from these two pains!

"Your suffering will be your obligation to be occupied with earthly things," said the divine Spouse.

This was not less true . . . When this dear soul came back from Heaven, the return to exterior occupations was a great weight upon her, so much did she languish with desire for the eternal hills!

"What dost thou gain, good Master," she sighed,, *"in allowing me still to live?* . . . or rather, *"Good Master, take me."*

To these supplications Jesus answered: *"My daughter, you must still remain. I am going to prepare your place."*

"I have yet many things to reveal to you . . . When everything is accomplished in you, I shall take you. The illness that will cause your death will come out from My Wounds."

And Sister Mary Martha awaited, with resignation, in the daily accomplishment of her "task", the Good Pleasure of God.

CHAPTER XXIX

LAST YEARS AND DEATH

". . . . For I shall go over into the place of the wonderful tabernacle, even to the House of God."
(Ps. XII, 5.)

THE year 1887 closed in our Monastery with a very painful sacrifice.

Having suffered for a month with bronchitis, which caused us serious disquietude, our very honored Mother Thérèse-Eugénie Revel appeared to be growing better, when rheumatism, from which she had suffered for a long time, suddenly attacked the heart; the danger was imminent and the last Sacraments were administered. On the morning of December 30, even before the Community could assemble, our Mother was suddenly taken from us. Only a few Sisters in tears surrounded the bed where she lay dying; the others came in haste at the distressing cry: *"Our Mother is dead!"*

January 4, 1888, God gave our grieving family, as a consoling angel, our very honored Mother Jeanne-Marie-Anne Spinella, former novitiate companion of the good Sister Mary Martha. Six years later, our very honored Mother Jeanne-Françoise Breton succeeded her in the charge of Superior, and from then until 1917, these two beloved Mothers alternated in the government of the Community. Our Lord did not permit that the new Superiors should have a precise

knowledge of the graces with which He had favored His Servant, Sister Mary Martha. Regarding as a deposit of conscience the books containing her confidences, our very honored Sister Marie-Alexis Blanc had remitted them, after the death of our Mother Thérèse-Eugénie, to the Abbé Collonge, our new Almoner; and they were destined to remain in his hands until the decease of the Privileged One of the Lord. The venerated Sister Marie-Alexis died in 1893. One of the consolations of Sister Mary Martha had been to bestow her devoted attention upon the one who was her last confidante, and whose decease was to seal for a long time the secret of the divine favors.

Sister Mary Martha, usually so much affected on such occasions of mourning, appeared entirely peaceful, in the sure conviction she had of the eternal happiness of our former Mother for whom we wept. She affirmed that we had not lost her; and so complete was her assurance that one of our Sisters said to her one day:

"Tell me, have you seen her?"

"Oh, well, yes," she admitted, and pointing to a place in her little domain: *"I have seen her there, but you shall not know any more."*

Our dear Sister was reaching her fifty-second year; a new phase was opening in her existence. At her urgent request, in return for a generous resignation to His Will in the death of our two Superiors, Our Lord had promised her that silence should conceal the favors that He bestowed upon her, and that a veil always more impenetrable should keep her hidden. During this last period nothing of the extraordinary graces with

which she was favored appeared exteriorly: nothing except the long hours during which the pious Domestic Sister remained before the Blessed Sacrament, immovable, unconscious, as though in ecstasy. Continual prayer, labor, mortification, silence, absolute effacement—such was her life. But during this time, like the grain of mustard seed cast into the earth, the devotion to the Holy Wounds germinated in hearts.

Here, we shall let our very honored Mother Jeanne-Françoise speak. Nearly all of the following details are drawn from the unedited abridgment of the life of Sister Mary Martha by this regretted Mother, who assisted the Servant of God in the supreme combat, and received her last sigh.

Shortly after our first election (1894), this good Sister approaching with respect and humility, said: *"Mother, the good God says that He can make a Superior 'out of a dry stick'!"*

We could not help smiling at this encouragement, so unexpected, but so apt; nor could we help admiring the perfect simplicity with which it was presented.

When in 1904 the Boarding School disappeared it was a blow for our good old Sister. For nearly forty years she had spent all her strength and devotedness in the service of "our children". Our children were greatly missed! For the rest . . . this earth was so sad, and her good Master seemed to her so much offended!

The passage of our exiled Sisters, the threats under which we ourselves lived, the preparations that our Monastery had to make in view of an eventual departure, broke her heart, the more so as Jesus remained mute in regard to all her questions.

When we urged her to tell us if she knew anything of the designs of Providence in our regard, she had but one word: *"He says nothing!"* What signified this silence to which the good Master had so little habituated her? At the present time, knowing all the assurances formerly given to our Mothers, and also the threats that He would not keep His promises *"if love relented"*, we understand the anxiety that distressed the heart of our dear Sister . . . She then redoubled fidelity to her "task", that is to say, the offering of the divine Wounds of Jesus for the Community and souls. Until her death, her last years above all, her whole spiritual life seemed reduced to that: I have accomplished my "task", she said, at every manifestation of conscience. Sister Mary Martha aged very much at this time, but without diminishing, in spite of her increasing infirmities, her zeal for prayer and labor.

She needed courage in order to accomplish her work, although simplified: sweeping, gathering vegetables, fruit, etc. But Our Lord continued to bless all that was confided to her, the strawberries especially fructified astonishingly. When the closing of the School obliged us to seek some resources in the products of our enclosure, "the strawberries of Sister Mary Martha" were greatly appreciated. In spite of her swollen and rheumatic limbs, she was often seen at four o'clock in the morning, bent to the ground, gathering these beautiful and good strawberries, of which before six o'clock she carried an enormous quantity to our Sister Procuratrix. Friends to whom they were sold found in them the exquisite taste of the wood strawberries. Had this exceptional flavor been left there by her divine little

Aid? We know not, but it is certain that they sometimes heard her talking with an invisible being, and the extraordinary, even religious care that she gave to her crop proved that she saw a gift of God in each one of her fruits.

The divine Master was preparing soon to crown His humble Spouse.

At the time of the great drought of 1906, our Sister seemed crushed under the weight of the Justice of God: *"The good God is greatly displeased, He is very angry,"* she confided to our honored Sister Assistant. *"Do you not see how He punishes? Ah, He is angry with men . . .*

The latter replied: "Sister, you always see Our Lord irritated . . . but is He not above all good and merciful? . . .

"Oh, yes! He is good, but He is so greatly offended! Our Lord suffered so much for them: now, He punishes. I always pray much that He may pardon; but I am not sufficient . . . The whole world must pray . . ."

Poor dear Sister! She spoke truly, her life was only a prayer, and nothwithstanding the weariness of age, it was with her arms extended that we saw her, after her day of labor, making the Way of the Cross and offering the Holy Wounds for the salvation of the world.

During the last Christmas night that she passed on earth, Jesus seemed to have warned her of her near departure from this world, and at the same time of the sufferings that He wished still to demand of her. A Sister who was near her during the Midnight Mass heard her exclaim in anguish: *"Oh, my Jesus! not that . . . all, yes all, but not*

that . . . " "That!" must have been distressing painful illness . . . *"That!"* must have been above all the interior abandonment, the absence of the Beloved Savior . . . She, habituated to His dear Presence, to His daily conversation, could not, without frightful anguish, accept this privation. So, we observed from this time the impression of a profound sadness imprinted upon her countenance.

Her strength visibly declined, and this had given her an appearance of age far beyond her years. The winter was very cold, but habituated to disregard her miseries, she always kept on, although her limbs were considerably swollen and a heavy cold made her suffer day and night. This was so usual for her during the bad weather that no one was alarmed. The best remedy, according to her, was to go through the garden, even when covered with snow, looking for some vegetables.

However, the moment came, when her suffering always increasing, she was obliged to go to the Infirmary. The doctor found serious complications. On the next day, she had a presentiment of her approaching end, and asked for the last Sacraments. This was February 13, 1907, the second day of the "Forty Hours."

A painful Calvary remained for her to ascend: five weeks of supreme purification, during which her Savior associated her more than ever with the physical and moral agonies of His Passion. Swelling and oppression allowed her no comfortable position. The remedies ordered to prolong her life, served only to augment her sufferings, whilst she seemed a prey to an interior abandonment more

severe and more prolonged than she had ever yet experienced.

However, spiritual graces were exteriorly abundant; her good Master deigned to come to her each morning to fortify her in the Holy Communion; each evening brought her a paternal visit from our Confessor, that she gratefully received. These helps were very necessary to her, as God permitted suffering and abjection to reduce her to a previously unheard of condition. We felt that there was something mysterious in this ultimate combat of nature. We were not far from believing that there might be a return of the diabolical assaults that had formerly made her suffer so much. A painful silence seemed to hover around this dear ill Sister. She could hardly pay attention to those who came to watch at night, or to visit her. The desire of death seemed very distant from her heart, as she removed everything that could remind her of it . . . Soon her silence became a sort of drowsiness. Sister Marie-Jacqueline, who had been professed with her, was Aid in the Infirmary, and spent with her as much time as her own infirmities permitted, bestowing devoted care upon her when the Infirmarian was obliged to leave.

Each morning we had to find out if she would be able to receive Holy Communion; several times during the last week it had to be omitted. What passed then between her soul and Jesus? . . . No one has the secret . . . Her good Master having constantly associated her with His own Passion, was, perhaps, finishing in her a resemblance to His death. Perhaps He multiplied her pains for those among us whom she was yet to aid to enjoy God the

sooner by the merits of the Holy Wounds, and for those poor sinners, those suffering souls, to whom all her life had been given and immolated.

The last three days of this victim were heartrending. She calld Our Lord unceasingly: *"My All! My All! . . . Come! Come! but come quickly! . . .*

For some time the general swelling of her body had obliged her to remain in an armchair. It became necessary to tie her in it, as she constantly slipped forward. It was pitiful to see her, without a minute of rest day or night.

Her Beloved still came to visit her, but she did not cease to supplicate Him even at the thanksgiving: *"My Beloved! . . . "My Beloved! . . .* Did He then veil the holy Humanity, which since childhood she had contemplated in all her Communions? Or did this momentary gift only sharpen the hunger for God that eternal possession alone could satisfy? God alone knows.

The night of Wednesday to Thursday, March 21, was terrible. Uninterrupted cries: *"Mother help! . . . help!"* . . . had broken all hearts. These cries did not cease until morning. We were persuaded that in this supreme struggle with the enemy, our good Mother in Heaven had finally rendered her victorious. This good Mother was to come at the first Vespers of her Dolors, to seek the privileged child whom she had taught to love Jesus Crucified. The grace of the holy absolution was given to her several times, and prayers for the recommendation of the soul were said. She gave no sign of consciousness; but on her features, lately contracted by suffering and anguish, there gradu-

ally appeared the calm of eternal repose. It was a sight not wanting in grandeur, evoking the remembrance of deaths represented in certain pictures; a Saint Louis, a Saint Francis Xavier, expiring on a miserable cot or on a bed of ashes.

We surrounded her with our presence and our prayers. Thousands of times, perhaps, the Community recited this invocation: *"My Jesus, pardon and mercy through the merits of Thy Holy Wounds,"* that she herself had repeated so many times for our dying Sisters! . . . Were they not invisibly in the poor little cell, these dear deceased, these venerated Mothers, who had preceded her to the Fatherland? . . . What a beautiful cortège they must have made for this humble Domestic Sister at her entrance to Heaven!

Towards eight in the evening came the last breath,—so peaceful that we could hardly perceive it . . . and whilst we continued to surround the virginal remains with our prayers, the abode of glory saw—we love to believe—the realization of one of the visions that had rejoiced the heart of Sister Mary Martha in the days of her youth. Her soul was transported to Paradise. The Blessed, opening their ranks, allowed her to pass until she was very near Our Lord, whilst they chanted in chorus with ravishing voices: *"He who was the least among you shall become the greatest!"*

"Et exaltavit humiles!"

CHAPTER XXX

AFTER DEATH

AN APPEARANCE of youth, truly extraordinary, spread over the features of Sister Mary Martha shortly after her decease, giving her an appearance of distinction and nobility, which she was far from having had during life. No trace of mortification appeared on this body that gangrene had marked for several days with its livid spots.

According to the custom of the Order, our dear Sister was clothed in the religious habit; on the black veil (1) was placed a crown of white roses. As a measure of prudence for the future, a notice of the civil condition or rank of the deceased was enclosed by our Mother Jeanne-Françoise Breton, in an iron box closed with the seal of our Monastery, and placed on the body as a means of identification.

On the bier, uncovered and surrounded by white flowers, the Servant of God remained exposed in the Choir until the time of the funeral, which took place March 23, in the morning. For several years, we had no longer enjoyed the consolation of preserving, in our little cemetery, the re-

(1) The white veil, necessitated by the work of our Domestic Sisters, is replaced after death by the black veil, which the Chapter Sisters receive at their profession.

mains of our deceased Sisters. Therefore, it was with emotion that we saw the venerated coffin cross the enclosure door for the funeral ceremony which was to take place in our external Chapel. (1)

The body of Sister Mary Martha was buried in the city cemetery where it was to remain for ten years, until May, 1917. (2) Our different concessions having reached their end, we obtained at this date the authorization to bring back to the Monastery, our Sisters who had died since 1901.

The coffin of the Servant of God—which had been in a damp place—was almost entirely decayed, as well as the flesh. The skeleton and the clothing had not undergone any notable change. A curious detail: the body of our Sister Marie-Jacqueline, deceased in 1908, was found intact, a fact so remarkable, that the grave diggers exclaimed: "It is Sister Arbet who is the Saint!"

The remains of Sister Mary Martha, placed in a new coffin, were deposited in our cemetery.

As we have said above, after the death of the Privileged of Jesus, the manscripts relating to her graces had passed from the hands of our Chaplain to those of our very honored Mother Jeanne-Françoise Breton. Hardly had the latter read the first pages, when she understood the value of the treasure that had been confided to us, and felt

(1) The Abbé C., Vicar of the Parish, assisting at the obsequies of Sister Mary Martha, remembered what was said to him by the Abbé Collonge, our Chaplain: "Some day this Sister will be talked about."

(2) Some pious persons have the habit of visiting this humble tomb, and of having recourse to the Servant of God to obtain spiritual and temporal favors.

the desire to communicate to our Institute the spiritual riches contained in these precious Memoirs. Following the custom established by our Holy Founders, she then undertook *"The abridgment of the Life and Virtues of our dear Sister Mary Martha Chambon."* Circumstances, however, imposed a prudent reserve, and our good Mother contented herself with sending to our Monasteries the short obituary article from the Book of Vows, inviting the Sisters to repeat often with us:

"Lord, deign to glorify Thy Servant who has glorified Thee by her humility and by her zeal in making known with so much love the merits of Thy Holy Wounds!"

During fifteen years the shadow that had been here below the constant companion of Sister Mary Martha, seemed still to envelop her. All concerning her progressed slowly until the day, when suddenly, as a flash of lightning that rends the cloud, the "Notice," the result of circumstances, brought into light both the devotion to the Holy Wounds and the humble Apostle to whom the Crucified Savior had confided the mission of spreading it.

In 1915, Canon Maillet, Vicar General of the Diocese, a distinguished casuist and noted theologian, possessing besides, a very practical mind, was appointed our Spiritual Father. Having been Extraordinary Confessor of the Community since 1895, and an intimate friend of Canon Collonge, he knew Sister Mary Martha. The abridgment of her life and the manuscripts having been placed in his hands, he was pleased to say: *"Everything is conformed to the most sound doctrine. I have found nothing therein contrary*

to the teaching of the Church." And he strongly urged us to bring to light the account of the graces accorded our Sister. His Grace, Msgr. Castellan, was favorable to this design, which was spoken of vaguely as of a project which could not but meet with difficulties.

Such was the condition of things, when one day the conversation turned to the subject of the *"silence"* kept from Heaven by our Privileged Sister. Our very honored Sister Jeanne-Marie-Anne Spinella smilingly remarked: *"When I shall be in Heaven I will 'stir up' Sister Mary Martha!"*

This was in 1922, some weeks before her death. In fact, shortly after this decease our very honored Mother felt strongly urged to realize one of the desires of the regretted Deceased: to request the extension to the whole world of the indulgence granted to the invocations of the Holy Wounds. (1) The steps to be taken and the necessity of enlightening the ecclesiastical Superiors of the Diocese regarding the origin of these two prayers, determined the publication of our "Notice": *Sister Mary Martha Chambon and the Holy Wounds of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

We said in the "final word" of the second edition, that when events led us to publish these pages (December 13, 1923) we thought they would not go beyond the family enclosure of our Monasteries—or of the intimate friends of the House—and that a few hundred copies would be sufficient: whereas, at the present time the imagined hundreds, have become hundreds of thousands, including the ten or twelve translations into foreign languages.

(1) This indulgence granted in 1909 to our Community, had been extended in 1912 to the whole Order of the Visitation.

CHAPEL OF OUR LADY OF THE DOLORS
At the left, the flag stone which covers the remains of Sister Mary Martha.

The devotion went out of the Monasteries, crossing the frontiers and the oceans. The "Notice" of the Holy Wounds has spread everywhere, as have, likewise, the Leaflets containing the "Chaplet of Mercy". From every part of the world the invocations to the true Sources of salvation ascend to Heaven; from every direction arises the cry of gratitude for the favors obtained by this holy practice! It is a renewal of devotion to the Passion of the Savior; it is the "Mission" of Sister Mary Martha which is being accomplished.

Aroused by the reading of the "Notice", a desire has arisen in pious hearts: that of knowing better the loving aged soul, the instrument of divine Mercy. A unanimous sentiment of veneration and confidence has also arisen, piously surrounding the name of the humble Domestic Sister.

Before this movement coming from without, how was it possible that the interior of the Monastery could remain unmoved? The exhumation of the remains of the Servant of God appeared necessary. January 31, 1924, they found the coffin entire and closed, nearly all of the bones, and a part of the clothing. The rusted impression of the iron box, which doubtless had disappeared during the labors of the first exhumation, was distinguishable on a sleeve of the habit. Some fragments of the wax with which it was sealed were also found.

After their medical identification, these bones were placed, February 11, in a leaded zinc coffin, and deposited

under a marble slab in the Chapel of Our Lady of Sorrows, where our dear Sister had so often knelt.

It was not long before Sister Mary Martha sent us a smile from highest Heaven. The First Friday of November, 1925, one of our Domestic Sisters, who for several months had been in a state of exhaustion brought on by an almost impossible condition of alimentation, suddenly recovered her strength and facility of digestion, after a novena made to the servant of God.(1)

It was not only in the Monastery that the Privileged One of Jesus manifested her power of intercession. Letters received attest the reception of favors, which seem to be proportioned to the confidence of the clients of Sister Mary Martha: relief in suffering—graces of light and strength to understand and profit by the Cross—conversions, and cures. As a pledge of protection, and an assurance of being more readily heard, a number of pious persons asked that their names and their request be placed on the tomb of the humble Servant of God.

As to the multiplied testimonies of satisfaction received after the publication of the "Notice", we shall cite but one, which seems to sum up all, and is signed by a name which death has consecrated.

(1) A fact officially verified by Dr. Amédée Danarié.

Paris, September 22, 1924.

"I am very late in acknowledging the reception of your admirable brochure. It is because I wished to read and enjoy it before expressing my thanks.

"The seal of God is everywhere in these pages, so despoiled of self.

"This 'Notice' is a signal benediction which opens the soul of Christ to all, and, for my part, I wish to keep the remembrance of it until my departure, until my arrival where all light is perfected.

"I am in admiration of the manner in which Our Lord keeps His way of action in a determined center. It is really the same grace for Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque and for the happy Domestic Sister. It is the same manner of attaining heavenly things, of drawing them near to us, of burying ourselves in them.

Fr. T. G. Vallée, des Frères Prêcheurs.

Dieu soit béni!

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